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shôjo

Story & Art by

Hinako Ashihara

SOS

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Shôjo Edition

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
SOS is rated T+ for Older Teens and is recommended for ages 16 and up. It contains strong language, sexual situations, and mature themes.

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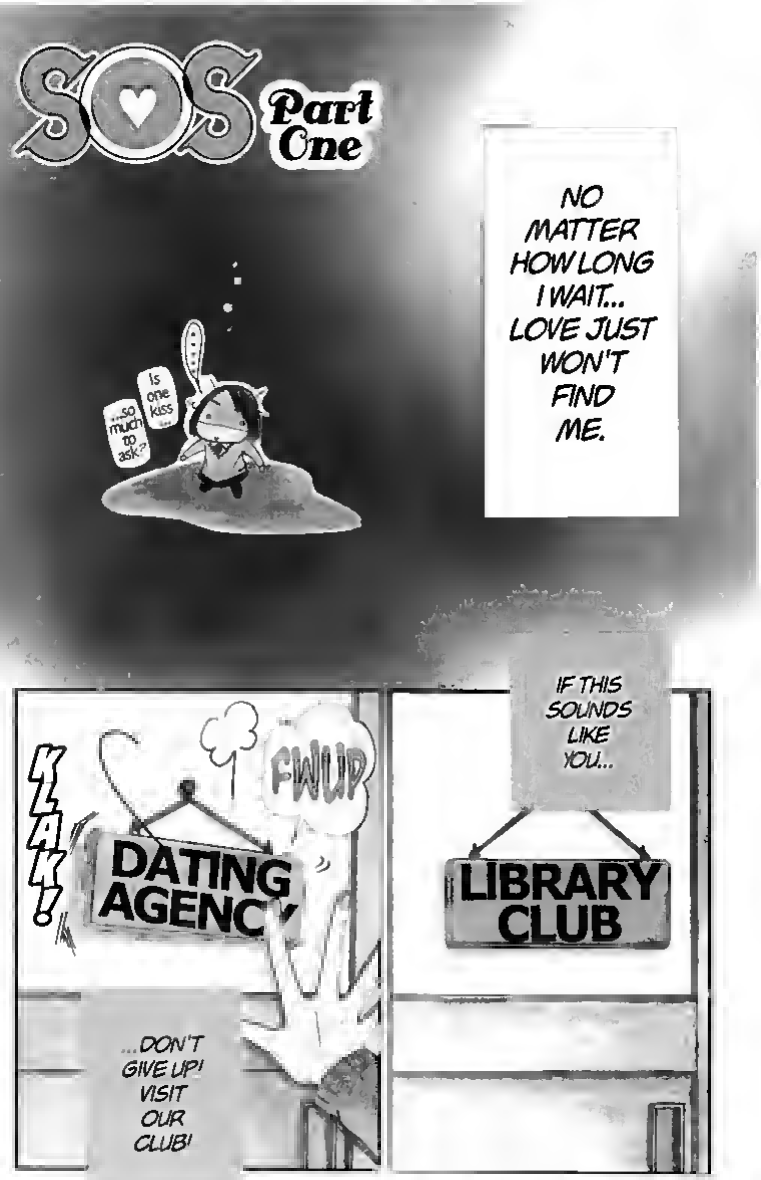

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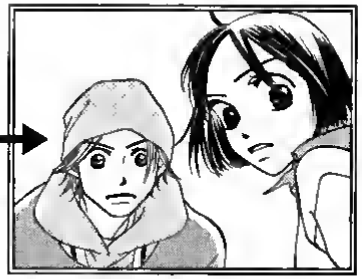

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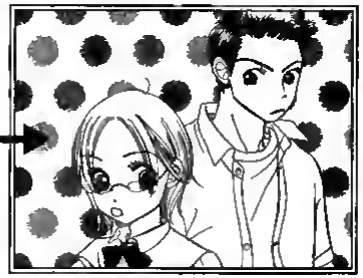

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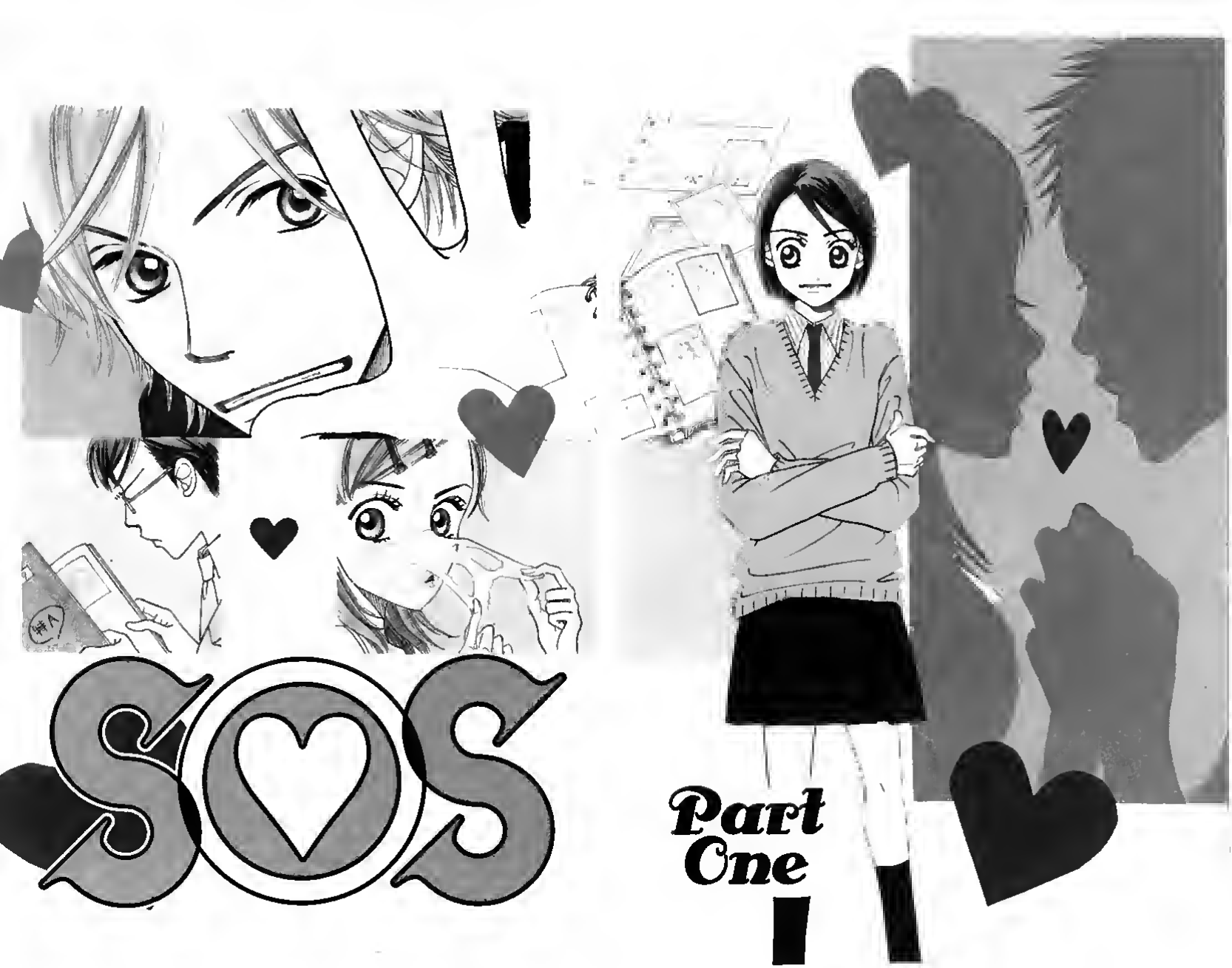

SOS
Part One

SHE'S THE ONE
THING IS, I NEVER HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK TO HER...
SO SHE'S IN CLASS TWO?
AND HER NAME'S SHIRAKAWA, HUH...?
I SEE. WELL, GOSH...
TYLER
...
...
THANKS SO MUCH, YÛ! I OWE YOU BIG TIME!
HUH?
IT'S SO COOL TO HAVE A WELL-CONNECTED FRIEND...
YOU MEAN IT?!
...
WAP
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME, GOTO?
I WOULD'VE HELPED YOU OUT!
HOW WAS I TO KNOW?!

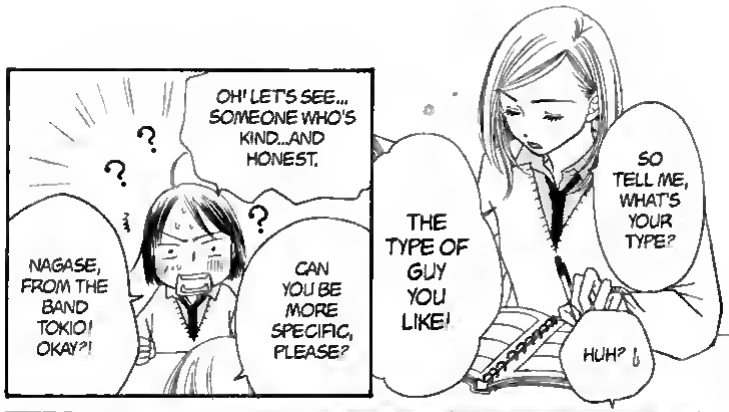
Help Me!

GRRR
I HATE MY LIFE!
...THROW THIS AWAY!
RIP
GWM
I MIGHT AS WELL...
WHY WON'T ANYONE FALL FOR ME?
HAAAA
This dumb thing!
HOLD ON, THERE!
WHAT A WASTE... DON'T DO SOMETHING YOU MIGHT REGRET.

You are the best!
OH, NO...
UGH
HEY!
GOTO SEEMS TO HAVE A GIRLFRIEND.
...I DID IT AGAIN!
SO MANY FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES...
WAAH!
I'M WELL LIKED, AND YET...
MY PHONE BOOK PROVES IT!
HEY, YÛ YOU DON'T LOOK WELL.
THAT TIME OF THE MONTH?
OH, SHUT UP!
WHAT?! YOU PLAYED CUPID?!
WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HELP THE GUY YOU HAVE A CRUSH ON?
AH!
AH!
AH!
Let it go!
JUST PLAIN STUPID, ARE YOU?
HA, HA, HA!
HOW LAME CAN YOU GET?!
YOU'RE TOO NICE!

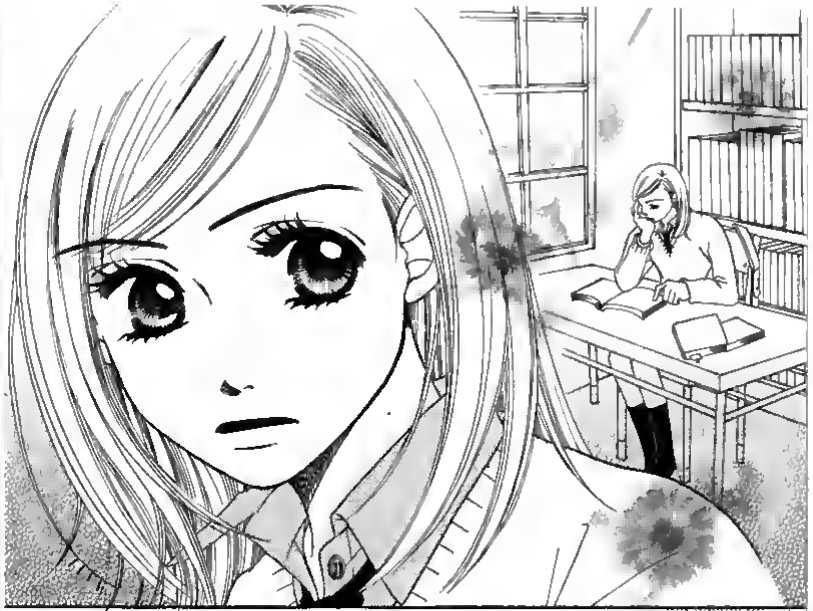
See Ya later!
?
?
THAT GUY...I KNOW HIM...
Here.
OKAY?
...DROP BY AND SEE ME SOME DAY!
Girls go gaga over him..
OOH AHH
"WORK"? WHAT DID HE MEAN BY THAT?
...HE'S THE CLASS FIVE FLIRT!
RAKU MIYAJIMA, A SECOND YEAR...
How odd!
THE LIBRARY CLUB...?
BUILDING A
HERE.
LIBRARY
LIBRARY CLUB
UM, HI! ARE YOU...
SWIP
...IT'S A CLUB ROOM.
BUT THIS...
...

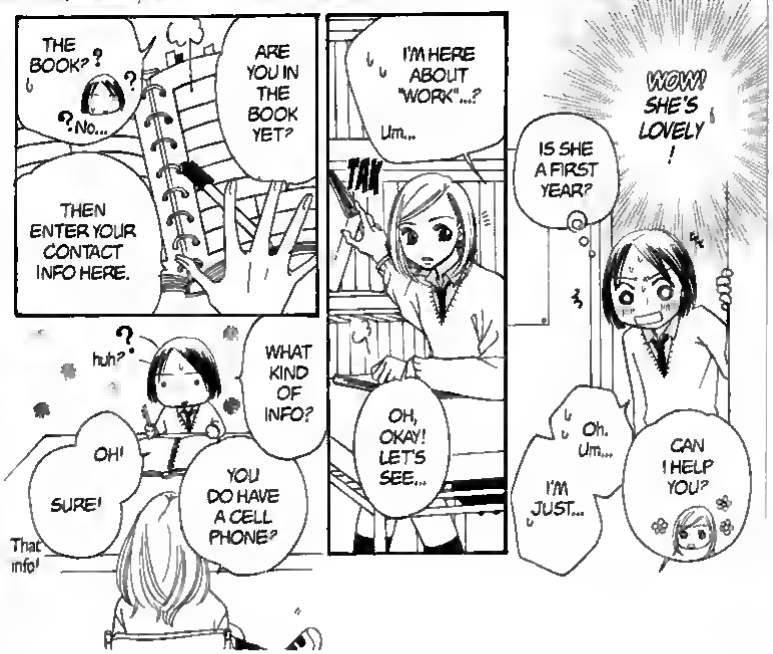
WHY DON'T WE USE THAT NETWORK OF YOURS PRODUCTIVELY?
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE...
...TO COME AND WORK WITH ME? IF YOU'RE INTERESTED...


OH! LET'S SEE... SOMEONE WHO'S KIND...AND HONEST.
NAGASE, FROM THE BAND TOKIO! OKAY?!
CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC, PLEASE?
THE TYPE OF GUY YOU LIKE!
SO TELL ME, WHAT'S YOUR TYPE?
HUH?

FWMP
Let me see. HERE WE ARE! A GOOD SELECTION... JUST PICK A FEW TO START WITH...
THAT WILL DO!
TAK

FIRST THIS ONE... AND THEN THIS ONE... AND...
No. 29
Oh! AND THIS GUY FOR SURE! YEAH!
Hobbies:
ba-bump
ba-bump
VERY COOL!!
Hm!
Died and gone to heaven!
...AND WE CAN ARRANGE AN IMMEDIATE DATE ONCE THE GUY AGREES!
YOU'RE TOO KIND!
SO GLAD TO HELP.
SO YOU'LL INTRODUCE ME TO THEM?!




THE BOOK?
No...
ARE YOU IN THE BOOK YET?
THEN ENTER YOUR CONTACT INFO HERE.
I'M HERE ABOUT "WORK"...?
Um...
TAK
OH, OKAY! LET'S SEE...
WOW! SHE'S LOVELY!
IS SHE A FIRST YEAR?
Oh. Um...
I'M JUST...
CAN I HELP YOU?
huh?
WHAT KIND OF INFO?
YOU DO HAVE A CELL PHONE?
OH! SURE!
That info!

WE JUST STARTED THIS SERVICE. PRETTY LUCRATIVE.
OF COURSE, THE SCHOOL DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT IT.
EEK!
HEH!
I'VE HAD MY EYE ON YOU...
HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT JOINING US?
I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK YOU'D MAKE A GREAT GO-BETWEEN!
heh!
IS THAT ALL I'M GOOD FOR?!
BUT...
...THAT JERK SMILED SO CHEERFULLY...
AW... COME ON.

THE FEE FOR AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS LEVEL OF MAN IS ¥5,000. First class!
F-
FIVE THOU-SAND YEN?!
YOU CHARGE FOR THIS?!
OF COURSE WE CHARGE FOR IT, IT'S WORK.
Economy is only ¥3,000!
How sick!
IT'S W-WORK ?
SO THIS WORK HERE... IT'S...
WHAT DO YOU CALL IT?
KACHAK
WELL, I CALL IT A DATING AGENCY!
"DATING AGENCY" ?!
NONO, TRY TO BE NICER ON THE JOB.
What's that ?!
GRR!

Not little high school boys!
UH... I REALLY PREFER OLDER GUYS.
WE CAN HELP YOU!
WE STAY ACTIVELY INVOLVED UNTIL YOUR DATE BECOMES A PERMANENT PARTNER. Normal rate ¥ 3,000
SELECT YOUR TYPE FROM THE MEMBER PROFILES.
IF HE OR SHE AGREES TO IT, WE SET YOU UP!
We work hard!
Yeah!
SALESMAN?
clap clap
Ahhh!
IF YOU STILL CAN'T FIND YOUR TYPE, OUR SKILLED STAFF WILL SEARCH THROUGH OUR ENTIRE NETWORK TO SERVE YOU!
OOOH!
IT TAKES ALL KINDS... AND WE'VE GOT 'EM! From boy-next-door to kinky!
...THAT EVERYONE HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR!
WE'D FOUND THE ONE THING...

Good deal!
...that I just...
...gave in!
OKAY. I'LL TRY IT.
SPREAD THE WORD TO YOUR FRIENDS! The single ones! OH! AND DON'T TELL OUR TEACHERS!
I don't care!
Now it's a job?!
GETTING JILTED HAS MADE YOU DEMENTED!
AND SO...
...MY LIFE AS A PROFESSIONAL CUPID BEGAN.
NOW THEN...
...OUR SYSTEM IS LIKE MOST POPULAR MATCH-MAKING CLUBS.
Hmm
GIRLS AND BOYS WANT TO FALL IN LOVE SO BADLY...
...THAT SOON THEY WERE BEATING A PATH TO OUR DOOR!
Did you hear?!
DATING AGENCY JOIN NOW!
YOU'VE STARTED YOUR OWN DATING SERVICE?
WHAT IS THIS?
We're working for you!

NIPPON GINKO
WHOAAA
EEP!
...IT'S NOT NEARLY ENOUGH!
WE HAVE TO MAKE MORE! MORE!
KRNK
IT'S LIKE A BIRTHDAY AND NEW YEAR'S ALL AT ONCE!
LOOK HOW MUCH WE MADE ALREADY!
What if the school finds out?
They'll kick us out for sure!
THIS ISN'T ENOUGH. NO...

YAH!
I'LL BE A BUSINESS-WOMAN!
I HAVE TO BE ABLE TO START MY OWN COMPANY!
I WON'T HAVE TO DEPEND ON MEN! I'LL LIVE ON MY OWN!
I'M SAVING UP! IT'S MY FUTURE WAR FUND!
N-NONO! BUT WHY DO YOU NEED SO MUCH MONEY?
...
We have to work harder!
YEAH.
SO YOU'VE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE JUNIOR HIGH?
I've known her for a long time
Hey, it's snowing!
SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT. SHE SAYS SHE DOESN'T NEED MEN.
HMMM... Well, that's too bad.
DOES NONO HATE MEN? She's so cute, it's a shame.

ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME?!
HEY!
NO WAY, NOT AT ALL!
THAT IS SO ADORABLE, YŪ!
I BET...
FSH
PMF
CAN'T YOU TAKE A COMPLIMENT, GIRL?

YOU GET YOUR KICKS OUT OF FLIRTING WITH GIRLS?
DON'T YOU WANT SOMEONE SPECIAL?
HMM?
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MIYAJIMA?
KNOWING THAT SOMEONE CHERISHES YOU...
...I BET THAT FEELS NICE.
I'D LIKE TO HAVE A BOYFRIEND.
...I WANT MORE!
BUT...
How can guys be so aloof?!
I'LL STICK TO THE FLIRTING.
I like to be free.

ABOUT SOS

THANK YOU FOR READING SOS, THE FIRST STORY IN THIS SINGLE VOLUME COLLECTION.

I FIRST BEGAN SOS AS A TWO-PARTER... OF THE RECENT MANGA I'VE DONE, THIS ONE TURNED OUT TO BE THE MOST DIFFICULT. I REALLY HAD A HARD TIME WITH IT. EVEN THOUGH IT'S OVER 100 PAGES LONG, I HOPE YOU ENJOY IT.

A FRIEND OF MINE WAS FEELING NOSTALGIC AND SAID, "WHEN WE WERE STUDENTS, EVERY DAY WAS LIKE A SINGLES PARTY."

IT'S TRUE.

THAT'S THE KIND OF STORY THIS IS. WELL, MAYBE NOT...

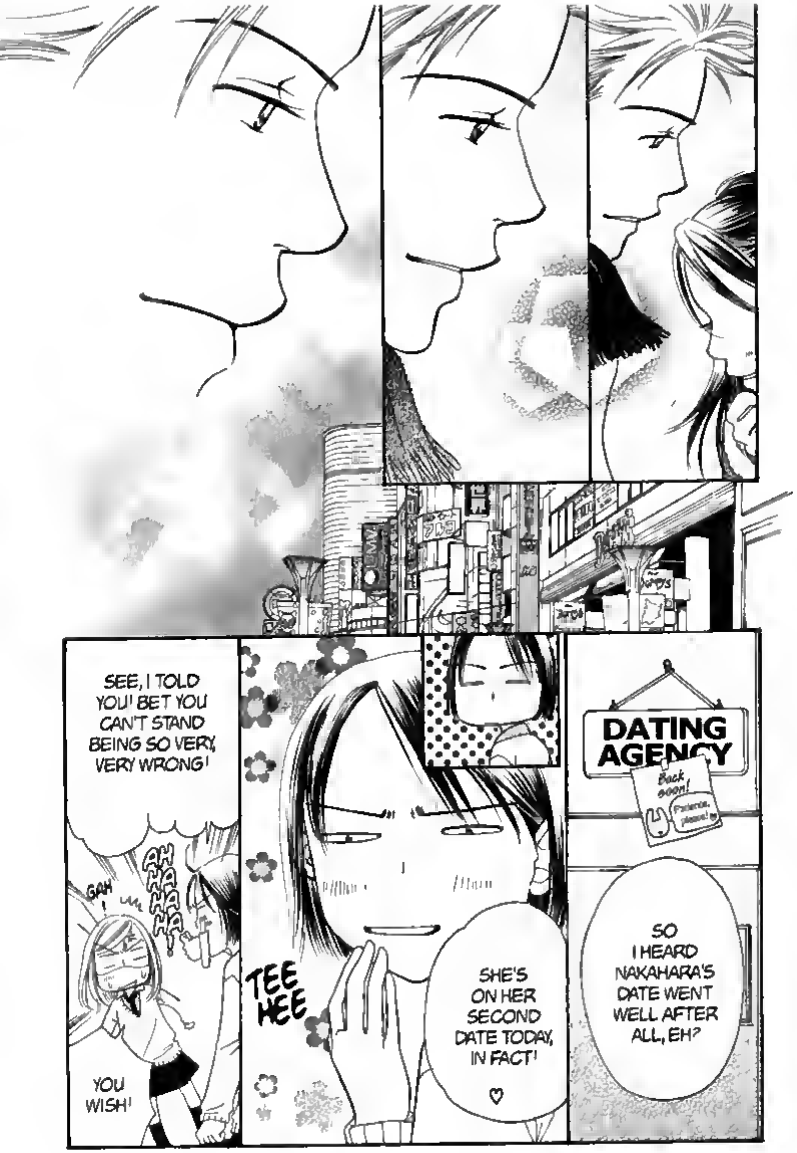
...EVERY-ONE'S SEARCHING ...
...IT JUST GETS HARDER TO FIND...
WE'RE ALL THE SAME.
AS OUR LIVES BECOME MORE PRIVILEGED AND SAFE...
...SOMETHING SPECIAL. SOMETHING REAL.

YOU CAN'T GO MAKING PROMISES LIKE THAT.
OUR JOB IS TO GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO MEET SOMEONE. THAT'S IT!
THEY CHOOSE THE KIND OF MAN THEY WANT, FOR GOOD OR ILL.
HOW IT WORKS OUT IS UP TO THEM.
Keep to the rules!
I'm your superior!
ARRRR
GRR!
HOW DARE YOU!
1st Year
2nd Year
GRR!
SEEMS LIKE YOU DO IT ALL THE TIME!
I CAN'T SIT BACK AND DO NOTHING!

mope
mope
mope
DON'T LOOK! IT'S A SAD SIGHT.
SHE'S BEEN DUMPED... FIVE TIMES IN A ROW!
PSST PSST
WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH HER?
I'VE BEEN TOLD MY SMILE CAME FROM THE FREAK SHOW.
I'M STUPID. I'M DISMAL.
I CAN'T TALK RIGHT.
I'M UGLY AND FAT.
I'M JUST NO GOOD, THAT'S ALL.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE! WE'LL MAKE IT WORK!
YOU'LL BE FINE!
NEXT TIME, IT'LL ALL WORK OUT!
YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO BE NICE!
THAT'S NOT TRUE! YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT!
geez!
SELF-ESTEEM IN THE TOILET
WAAAAH

...BUT YOU SAY YOU DON'T NEED MEN! HOW WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE, NONO?
Hm
YOU'VE GOT SUCH GOOD LOOKS...
SLAM
HUH?
NONO SAKURA!
WHAT A BIG JERK!
GIVE ME A BREAK!
FWAP!
DON'T FRET OVER IT...
PWF

I'M THE ONE...
...WHO KNOWS HOW NAKAHARA FEELS.
AND THAT'S WHY..
OOHoo
THIS...
...THIS IS ME?!
I was just an ugly duckling!
ISN'T SHE A LOOKER?
Extreme makeover!
WOW! YOU ARE SUPER CUTE!
What a gal!


SEE, I TOLD YOU! BET YOU CAN'T STAND BEING SO VERY, VERY WRONG!
GAH!
AHAHAHAHA!
YOU WISH!
TEE HEE
SHE'S ON HER SECOND DATE TODAY, IN FACT! ♡
DATING AGENCY
Back soon! Patience, please! ♡
SO I HEARD NAKAHARA'S DATE WENT WELL AFTER ALL, EH?

THANK YOU SO MUCH!
...I THINK I HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO TRY NOW!

HMM. LET'S SEE WHO'S CALLING.
PRINCESS PERFECT, YOUR CELL PHONE IS RINGING!!
090-XXXX
AIKO NAKAHARA
BEEP!
HELP ME!
HELLO, NAKAHARA? HOW'S YOUR DATE GO...

GRR GRR GRRR!
HA HA HA HA
I'VE NEVER FELT SUCH WAVES OF JOY! VINDICATION IS SUCH A SWEET PRIZE!
HAVE YOU HAD ENOUGH, OR SHALL I GO ON?
twirl
twirl
twirl
LA LA LA LA
YOU FREAK!
I FEEL SO GOOD, I THINK I'LL DANCE MY WAY TO THE BATHROOM!
Pirouetting
PUMP

WHAT A GREAT SYSTEM... FOR A MERE ¥3,000...
...I CAN DO IT WITH AS MANY WOMEN AS I WANT.
!!
NO...
klik
OOOOO!

NO! STOP IT!
I-I'M NEAR THE STATION... HE FORCED ME INTO A HOTEL ROOM!
NO, I...!
WHAK

?
AIKO
NAKAHARA
INCOMING
CALL 01
3:06 PM
BEEP!
...

SIP
TRMBLE
TRMBLE
NONO?!
WH... WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!
WHOA!
WOMP

WHAM
NONO ?!
WHAK
GWM
COME ON!
PHEW! I FOUND YOU!
TNK

SHE... SHE MIGHT BE IN TROUBLE! BAD TROUBLE!
IT'S NAKAHARA !
HEY! RAKU!
HEY! WHERE ARE YOU?
NAKA-HARA ?!
HOTEL
ZSH
...NEAR THE STATION !
A HOTEL...

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO FIND THEM?!
YŪ! THANK GOD!
HER DATE WAS AT THE AQUARIUM BY THE STATION, SO THEY MUST BE NEAR HERE...

BAM BAM
NONO!
A FILL-IN, EH?
KA CHAK
NONO!
FIRST I'M SERVED AN APPETIZER, AND THEN THEY BRING THE MAIN COURSE...
AND A HOT ONE! YOU'RE MUCH BETTER!

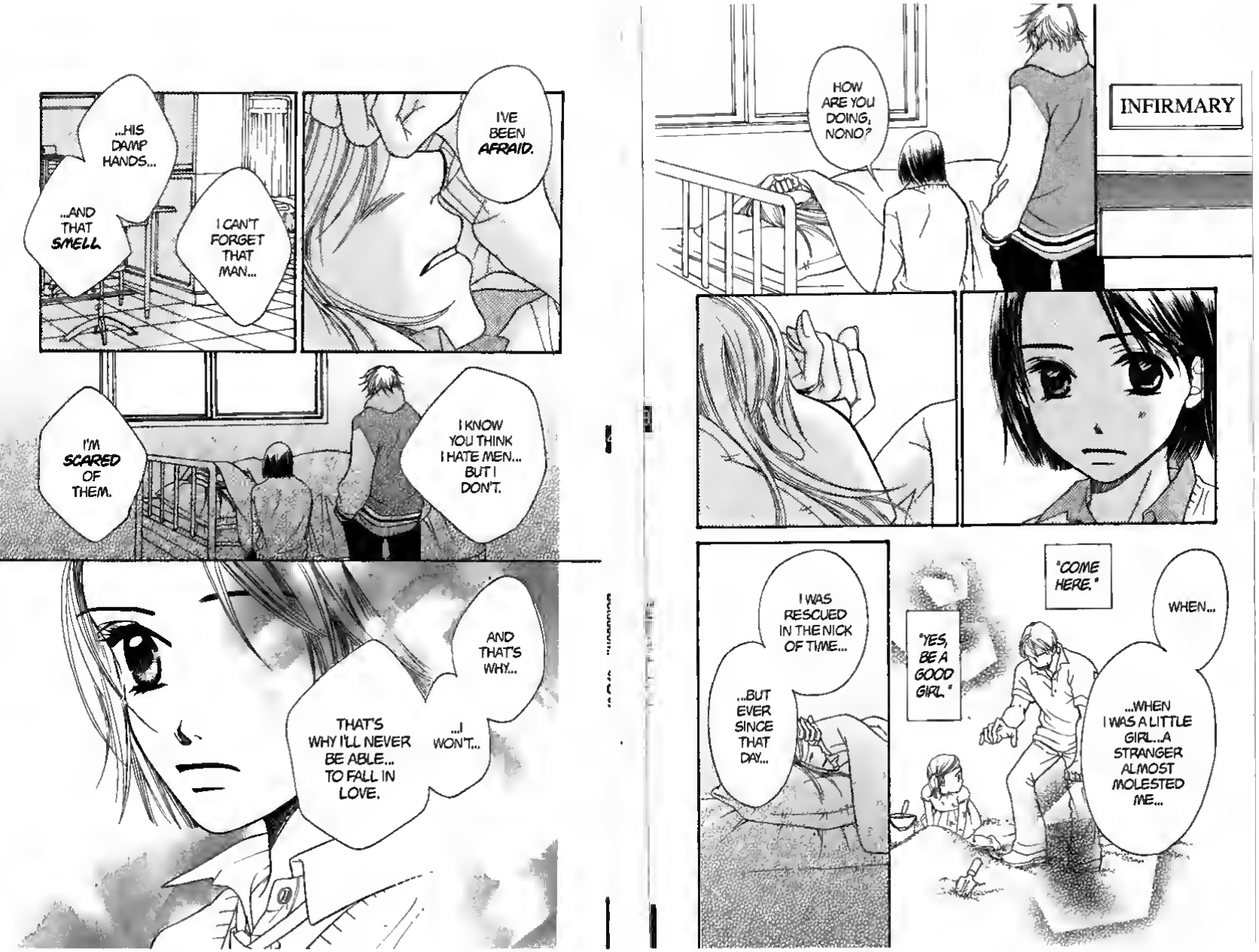
N-NO...
"...BE A GOOD GIRL."
"JUST STAY STILL. YES..."
"IT'S ALL RIGHT."
STOP IT...
NO, NO, NO...
NO.
STOP IT!

WHAT'S WRONG? YOU'RE FROZEN UP.
UH UN
ARE YOU TREM-BLING? THAT'S SO SWEET.
UNNH UH
IT... IT'S NONO! SH-SHE'S ...!

WH
MP
WHAM

STOP
!

HUFF
N-NO...
YAHH!
NONO. ARE YOU...
SHH... IT'S ME...

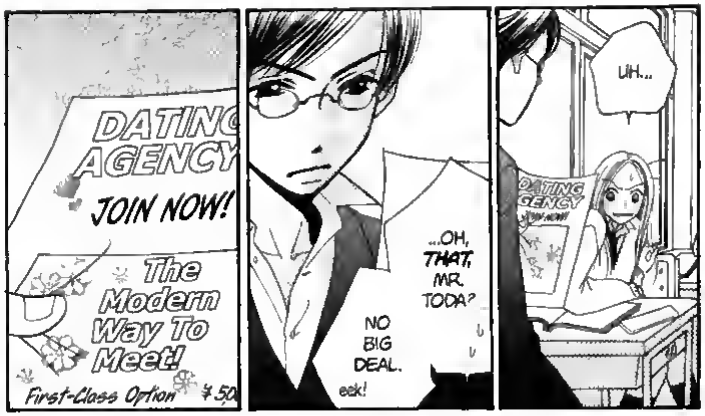

INFIRMARY
HOW ARE YOU DOING, NONO?
WHEN...
...WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL...A STRANGER ALMOST MOLESTED ME...
"COME HERE."
"YES, BE A GOOD GIRL."
I WAS RESCUED IN THE NICK OF TIME...
...BUT EVER SINCE THAT DAY...
I'VE BEEN AFRAID.
...HIS DAMP HANDS...
...AND THAT SMELL.
I CAN'T FORGET THAT MAN...
I KNOW YOU THINK I HATE MEN... BUT I DON'T.
I'M SCARED OF THEM.
AND THAT'S WHY...
...I WON'T...
THAT'S WHY I'LL NEVER BE ABLE... TO FALL IN LOVE.

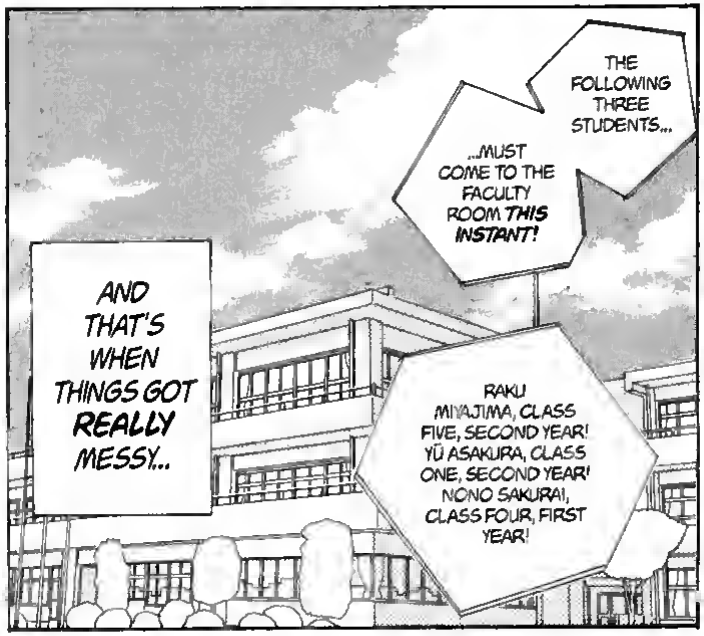
WHY DO I FALL FOR A GUY...
...WHEN HE'S ALREADY GOT HIS EYE ON SOMEONE ELSE?

IT'S ALL RIGHT. WHY DON'T YOU REST NOW...?
WHY DOES THIS...
...ALWAYS HAPPEN?

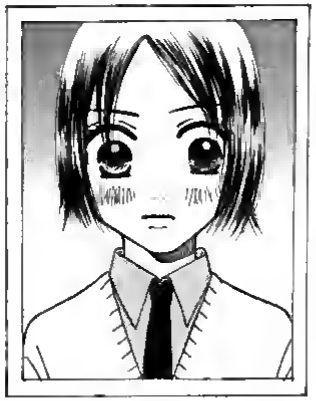
...STOP THIS...
...STOP THESE FEELINGS.

FWSSHT.
FSH
OKAY.
Thanks.
...I'LL GO AND GET ALL OF OUR THINGS.
SOME-ONE..
..HELP ME..
WUMP
SOME-ONE...
S.O.S.
S.O.S.


DATING AGENCY
JOIN NOW!
The Modern Way To Meet!
First-Class Option ¥ 50
NO BIG DEAL.
eek!
...OH, THAT, MR. TODA?
UH...


AND THAT'S WHEN THINGS GOT REALLY MESSY...
RAKU MIYAJIMA, CLASS FIVE, SECOND YEAR! YŪ ASAKURA, CLASS ONE, SECOND YEAR! NONO SAKURAI, CLASS FOUR, FIRST YEAR!
...MUST COME TO THE FACULTY ROOM THIS INSTANT!
THE FOLLOWING THREE STUDENTS...

PLEASE... HEAR MY DISTRESS CALL... MY SOS...
...AND STOP MY HEART FROM WANTING SO MUCH.
HMM! SO TELL ME, GIRLS... WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?
...
bong bong
HA HA HA



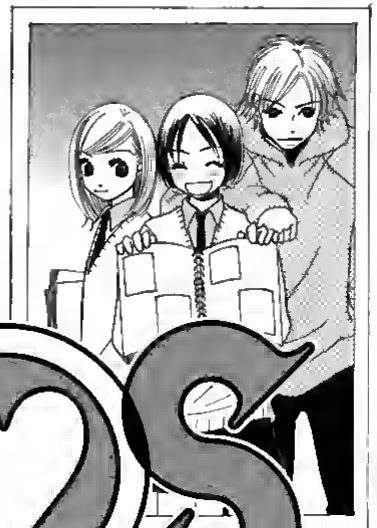
Yū Asakura

2nd Year, Class 1

Age: 16

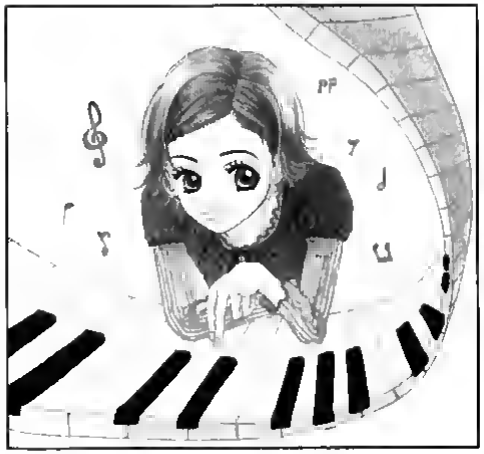
Hobbies: sleeping, eating.

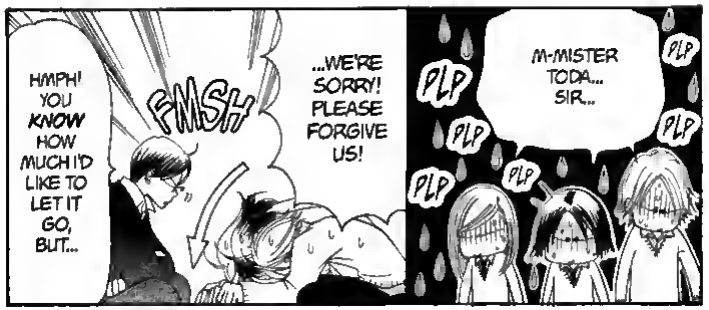
Ideal type: ???



Part Two

SOS



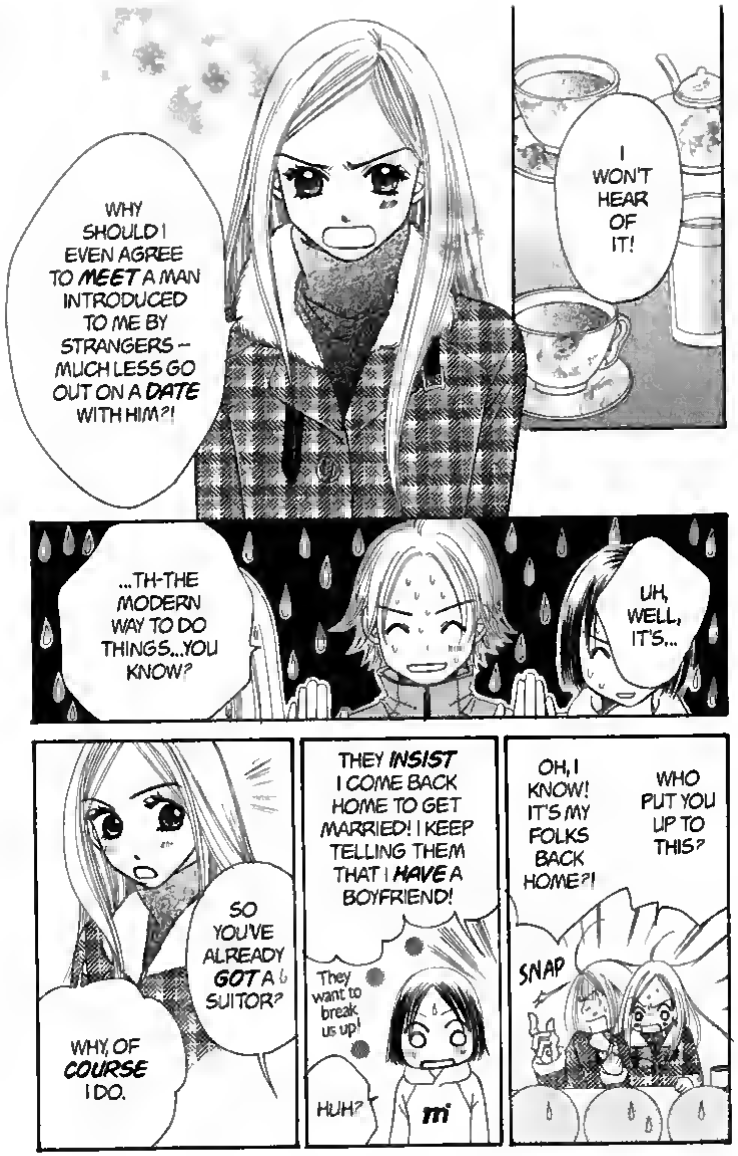

HMPH! YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I'D LIKE TO LET IT GO, BUT...
FMSH
...WE'RE SORRY! PLEASE FORGIVE US!
M-MISTER TODA... SIR...
PLP
PLP
PLP
PLP
PLP

PLEASE! WE'LL DO ANYTHING YOU WANT! JUST SPARE US!
SUSPENSION! POSSIBLY EXPULSION!
HOW SAD...
...WHAT WOULD THE OTHER TEACHERS SAY, HMM?

THEN WE...
...CAN MAKE... A DEAL.
ANY-THING?
YOU WILL?
UM..
YEAH..
IS THAT A SOLEMN PROMISE? IS IT?!
AH!
YOU'LL DO... ANY-THING?

DATING AGENCY
JOIN NOW!
The Modern
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?

...
"WE'LL FIND YOU A WONDERFUL LOVER! FIRST-CLASS OPTION ¥5,000, NORMAL OPTION ¥3,000!"
THAT'S PRETTY BOLD OF YOU, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?
...IS NOW IN FOR...
...SOME VERY SERIOUS TROUBLE.
THE COVERT DATING SERVICE WE BEGAN AT SCHOOL...
KLAK
DATING AGENCY


KAZUKI SONODA. 27 YEARS OLD. FIND HER A BOYFRIEND.
OTHERWISE, I'LL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO REPORT YOUR ACTIVITIES.
GEEZ! I DIDN'T EXPECT THAT.
Can't be too hard.
...TO EVER MENTION MY NAME. ARE WE UNDERSTOOD?
AND YOU ARE NOT...
AFTER ALL, A WOMAN LIKE THIS...
...CAN CHOOSE ANY MAN SHE WANTS! Let's go!
I DUNNO. IN ANY CASE, THIS SHOULD BE EASY.
SHE'S REALLY PRETTY. IS SHE SOME FRIEND OF HIS?
CHIN CHIN

WHY SHOULD I EVEN AGREE TO MEET A MAN INTRODUCED TO ME BY STRANGERS -- MUCH LESS GO OUT ON A DATE WITH HIM?!
I WON'T HEAR OF IT!
...TH-THE MODERN WAY TO DO THINGS...YOU KNOW?
UH, WELL, IT'S...
SO YOU'VE ALREADY GOT A SUITOR?
WHY, OF COURSE I DO.
THEY INSIST I COME BACK HOME TO GET MARRIED! I KEEP TELLING THEM THAT I HAVE A BOYFRIEND!
They want to break us up!
HUH?
mi
OH, I KNOW! IT'S MY FOLKS BACK HOME?!
WHO PUT YOU UP TO THIS?
SNAP

I NEVER SAID, "I LOVE YOU."
WE DIDN'T HAVE CASUAL SEX... I NEVER EVEN FLIRTED WITH HER!
BUT WE...
...WE'RE NOT GOING OUT!
YOU SEE... THAT'S THE PROBLEM!
THIS WON'T BE EASY AFTER ALL....
BUT...
EXPUL-SION
URGH
I DON'T KNOW! I MEAN, SHE SEEMS NORMAL. IT'S NOT OUT OF CONTROL. Not yet!
THAT'S JUST WHAT A STALKER DOES! ooh!
HE TOLD HER HE LIKES SOMEONE ELSE, BUT THE PHONE CALLS AND MAIL DON'T STOP.
SO SHE'S STALKING HIM?!

THE BEST PART IS... HE'S A HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHER! ♡
TEE HEE ♡
HIS NAME'S NAOHITO TODA, AND HE'S 28!
HEY! MISTER TODA!
SHE'S GOING OUT WITH YOU! IF YOU WANT TO BREAK UP...
DON'T BE SUCH A COWARD!
...JUST DO IT YOURSELF!
ARE YOU EVIL?!

GET OUT OF HERE!
KAEDE NURSERY SCHOOL
...WHAT OTHER CHOICE DO WE HAVE?
CAN'T YOU SEE?
I'M BUSY NOW!
We have to pee!
SORRY! BUT WE JUST GOT SOME NEW DATA ON THESE HOT MEN AND...
Yuji's picking on me.
HOW DARE YOU BARGE IN ON MY WORKPLACE LIKE THIS?!
NO, YOU CAN'T EAT THAT MUD PIE!
BESIDES... I'LL NEVER WANT ANY MAN BESIDES MY DEAR TODA!
GO! GET OUT!
LET GO OF ME!
Help us!
HAVE MERCY ON US, PLEASE!

...AND DON'T COME BACK!
LET ME BE!
LEAVE ME ALONE! GO AWAY...
GAH!
HEY! DOES THIS MAKE US...
DON'T MAKE ME CALL THE POLICE!
PERHAPS OUR PROFESSIONAL DEMEANOR IS OFFPUTTING.
Like we're door-to-door salesmen, conning old people...
IF WE GET TO KNOW HER, SHE MAY LISTEN TO US.
Oh, no...
...THE ONES WHO'VE GOT A STALKING PROBLEM?

...KAZUKI, YOU REALLY LOVE MR. TODA?
SO...
I'M MAD FOR THE MAN! ♥
AND THAT'S WHY...
...I DON'T NEED YOUR SERVICE.
...IT WAS JUST UNREQUITED LOVE. A SCHOOLGIRL CRUSH.
FOR SO LONG...
...WHEN HE TURNED TO ME AT LAST!
I WAS SO VERY HAPPY...
STILL, I JUST COULDN'T GIVE UP ON HIM.
...BUT HE ALWAYS HAD A GIRLFRIEND.
IN HIGH SCHOOL, WE HUNG OUT...

MAYBE I SHOULD GO ALONE NEXT TIME...?
See ya later, teach!
Bye!
Ugly kid!
Wow!
PIK PIK
SWP...
SO... YOU LIKE KIDS?
UM...
OH!
911...
LET ME SEE...
DIP
SUCH A CUTE LITTE BOY! Let's play!
How are you today?
UM, HELLO THERE. I'M BACK!
I COME IN PEACE!
CLICK
All clean!
I HOPE THEY LOOK LIKE HIM. ♡
SOMEDAY I WANT TO BE THE MOTHER OF TODA'S CHILDREN.
Give me your hand!
OF COURSE! DOESN'T EVERYONE?
Sort of...
LET'S WASH UP!
I LIKE 'EM, TOO.

I LOVED HIM SO MUCH...
...HAD TO DO!
LOOK AT HER..
...THAT IT FELT LIKE...LIKE I WAS LOSING MY MIND...
!...I DID WHAT !...
THAT'S WHAT I DID.
BUT SHE'S LOST HER HEART AND SOUL!
AND WHY?
BECAUSE SHE FELL IN LOVE...
KIND AND PRETTY... JUST A SWEET, NORMAL WOMAN.
Teacher!
...SO LOST!

YOU'RE IN HIGH SCHOOL... DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE SPECIAL?
OH, UH...
WHAT ABOUT YOU, THEN?
D-DID HE REALLY TURN TO YOU?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
...HE CARES FOR SOMEONE ELSE. NOT ME.
...BUT, YOU KNOW...
YES... I DO...
YOU SHOULD STEAL HIM.

That's what's wrong!
SHE'S A STALKER!
OH, COME OFF IT!
BUT SHE LOVES HIM! DON'T YOU SEE?!
SHE LOVES HIM, THAT'S ALL!
WHAT'S SO WRONG ABOUT THAT?!
WE'VE NO TIME FOR SYMPATHY! Cut it out!
BUT I CAN'T HELP IT!
OH, IT IS? THEN...
HE'S TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT THING! IT'S A REAL DRAG WHEN A GIRL YOU DON'T CARE FOR COMES AFTER YOU!

...BUT NO LISTS OF MEN!
IF YOU LIKE KIDS, COME BY ANY TIME...
NO GUYS TO PUSH ON ME TODAY?
...AND NOW SHE'S CRAZY OVER HIM.
LOOK AT HER... SO LOST!
...WELL, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL SORRY FOR HER...
DON'T FORGET, YOU HAVE A JOB TO DO!
...IT'S JUST THAT...
YES...
ANY PROGRESS? HOW'D IT GO?
DATING AGENCY
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "HUH"?
We could just flee the country.
HUH?

...LIKE I WAS LOSING MY MIND.
WE HAD OUR FIRST DATE HERE.
...THAT IT FELT LIKE I...
I LOVED HIM SO MUCH...
...BUT HE'S SO CUTE ABOUT IT.
He likes kids' TV shows!
HE'S NOT REALLY VERY DEEP...
...HALF AN HOUR LATE, DRENCHED IN SWEAT!
HE RAN UP...
SO IN LOVE.
HE JUST DOESN'T GET WOMEN AT ALL.
tee hee!
RRRING
HE WON'T ANSWER.
SEE HOW HE IS?
RRRING
...WHEN I NEED TO HEAR HIS VOICE.
I CALL HIM...
HE'S SO BASHFUL THAT HE GETS ANGRY WITH ME.

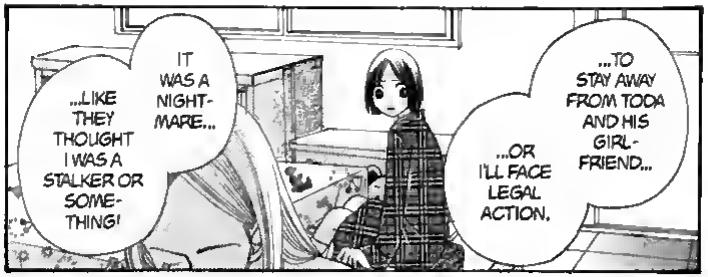
Not ME! Toda!
WHAT ?!
NO, IT'S YOU! IT'S YOU!
HUH?
THEN WHAT ABOUT THIS?!
THIS MESS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!
YŪ!
TMSH
JUST FORGET IT!
OHHH...
YOU'RE SO THICK!
AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I THINK.
HUH? ABOUT WHAT?
YŪ HAS THE WRONG IDEA.
? ?

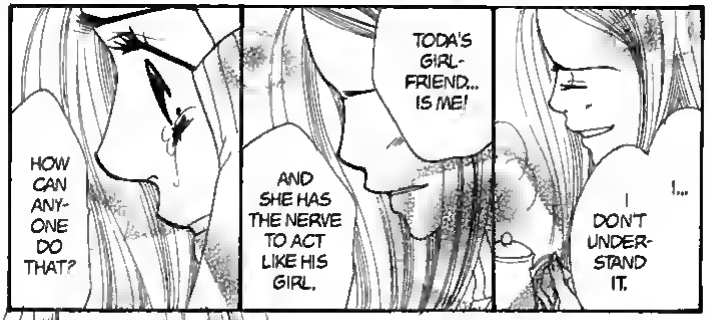
I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU. YOU'RE IN OVER YOUR HEAD!
YŪ, THAT'S NOT THE POINT! DON'T YOU SEE...?
DON'T WORRY! I WON'T DRAG YOU INTO THIS!
YŪ!
YOU... YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!
OH, I AM?
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW, HUH?

...YOUR FAULT THAT I'M THIS WAY.
RRRING
RRRING
IT'S YOUR FAULT...
...I CAN'T JUST QUIT ON HER!
BUT...
I'LL TALK TO HER!
SHE'S A GOOD PERSON. SHE JUST NEEDS A CHANCE!
YŪ!
...AND LET HIM KNOW WE'VE HAD IT.
I'LL GO TALK TO TODA...
YOU NEED TO STAY AWAY FROM HER!
WE NEED TO GIVE UP ON THIS ONE.
DATING AGENCY
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT SHE'S WAY SCREWED UP.
WH...?

BUT YOU SEE..
...IT'S STARTED TO GET OUT OF HAND.
FWIP
WE WERE FRIENDS. I NEVER WANTED THIS...
...FOR HER...
...TO BE IN SUCH PAIN, ALL BECAUSE OF ME...
WHAT'S THIS?
OPEN IT WITH CARE...
STAY AWAY FROM TODA!
...DON'T GET CUT.
THE POSTMAN DELIVERED IT TO MY GIRLFRIEND'S APARTMENT.

IT'S MADE HER A BASKET CASE.
YOU CAN'T FORCE HER ON US!
SHE'S CRAZY ABOUT YOU!
FACULTY LOUNGE
MR. TODA, YOU NEED TO HANDLE THIS GIRL ON YOUR OWN!
Well, cut it out.
YOU CAN HIRE A DETECTIVE OR CALL THE POLICE.
Like on T.V.!
YOU SAID YOU'D DO IT.
I WAS COUNTING ON YOU GUYS.
SHE WAS ALWAYS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT OTHERS THAN SHE WAS ABOUT HERSELF...

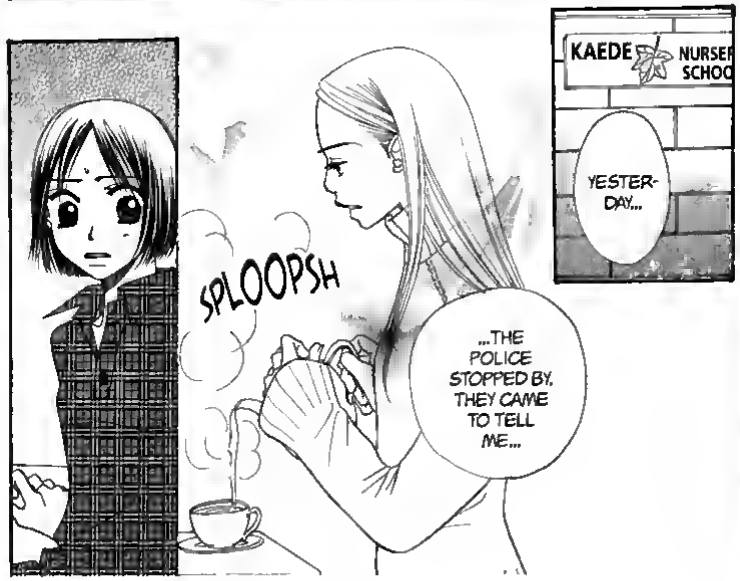

IT WAS A NIGHT-MARE...
...LIKE THEY THOUGHT I WAS A STALKER OR SOME-THING!
...OR I'LL FACE LEGAL ACTION.
...TO STAY AWAY FROM TODA AND HIS GIRL-FRIEND...

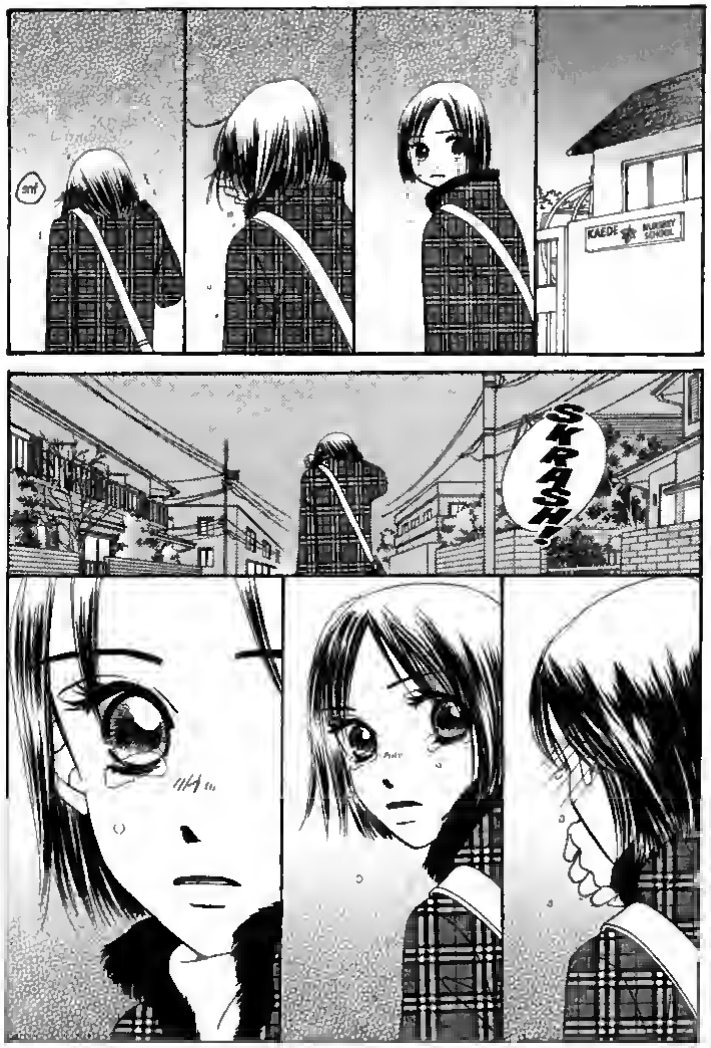

HOW CAN ANY-ONE DO THAT?
AND SHE HAS THE NERVE TO ACT LIKE HIS GIRL.
TODA'S GIRL-FRIEND... IS ME!
I DON'T UNDER-STAND IT.
!...

YOU HAVE IT ALL MIXED UP!
YOU HAVE TO...
...JUST LISTEN TO ME! PLEASE!
SHH, KAZUKI! PLEASE CALM DOWN!
TODA... HE WOULD NEVER SEND THE POLICE AFTER ME!

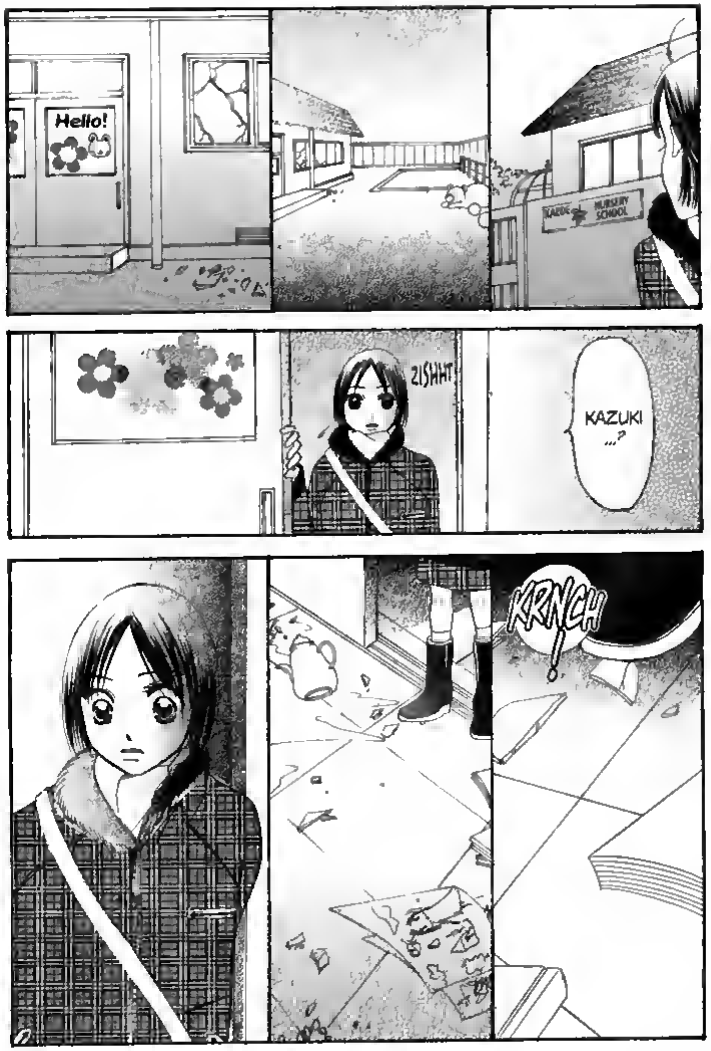
I'M SORRY ABOUT ALL THIS.
I'LL GO TO THE POLICE TODAY.
a razor !

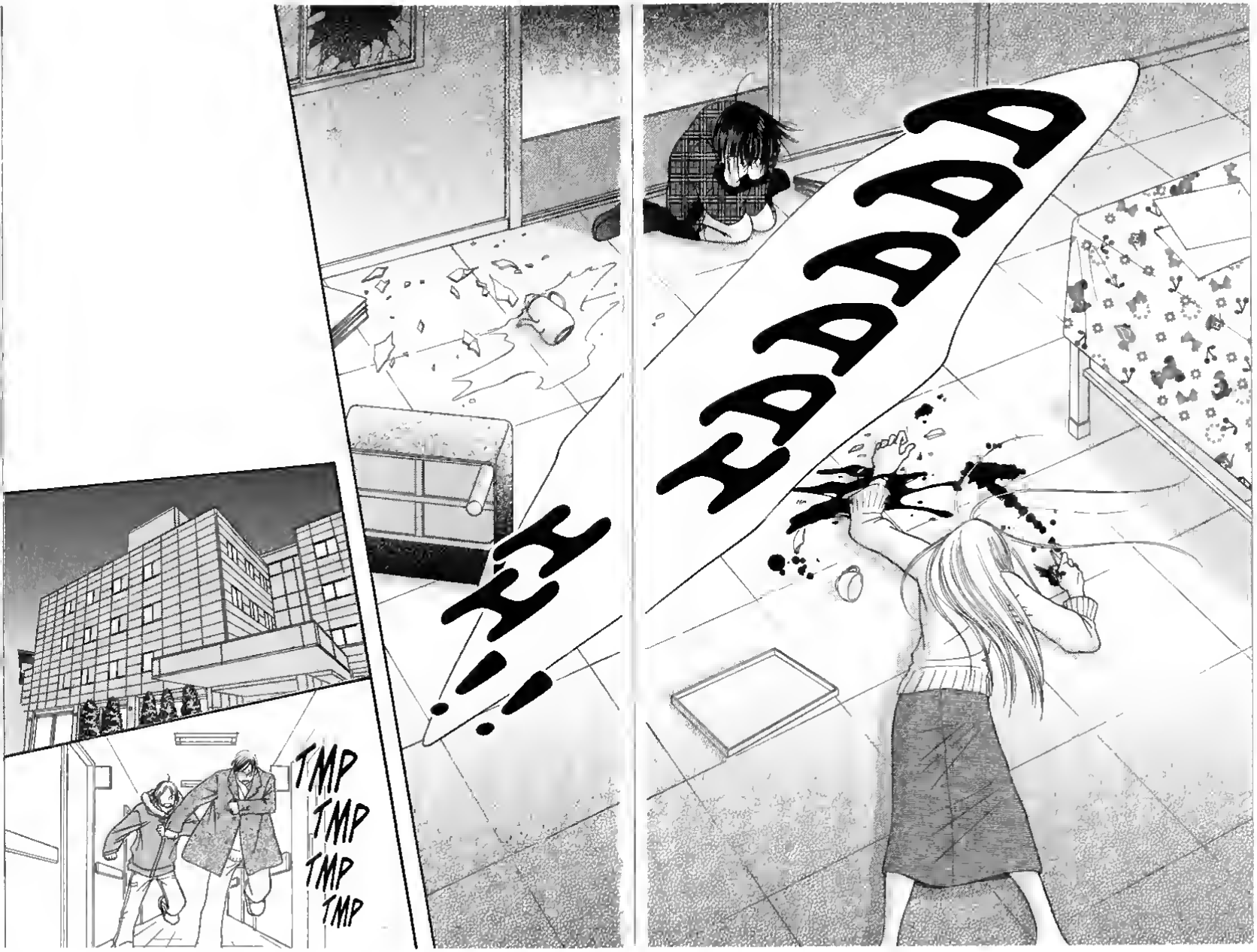
ka CLIK


KAEDE NURSER SCHOO
YESTER-DAY...
SPLOOPSH
...THE POLICE STOPPED BY. THEY CAME TO TELL ME...


KAEDE NURSERY SCHOOL
SKRASH!

YOU... YOU'RE NOT MR. TODA'S GIRLFRIEND! YOU HAVE TO UNDER-STAND!
WHAM
HOW CAN YOU EVEN SAY THAT?!
NO, NO, NO!
NO ...
WHAT?!
KRSH
GET OUT!
GO ON!
JUST LEAVE ME... ALONE!
JUST LEAVE ME IN PEACE!
GET AWAY FROM ME!


Hello!
KAEDE NURSERY SCHOOL
ZISHH!
KAZUKI ...?
KRNCH


TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
!!!
DADADA

SHE'LL FINALLY HAVE TO COPE WITH THIS... ON HER OWN.
NOW, IT'S ALL UP TO HER.
ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS HELP.

IS SHE ...?!
YOU MUST BE MR. TODA?
YŪ!
CAN I SEE HER?
THAT'S... NOT A VERY GOOD IDEA.
...AND SO SHE'S STABLE, FOR NOW.
POLICE. WE'LL NEED TO TALK.
HAS SHE EVER REALLY HEARD A THING YOU'VE SAID TO HER?
WHAT GOOD CAN YOU DO? CAN YOU SAVE HER?
BUT...!

I...I'M SO TIRED OF THE HURT...
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT IT... HURTS.
THUMSH
S.O.S.

I JUST WANTED TO HELP HER...TO MAKE HER SEE...
snf
HER S.O.S. SIGNAL AND MINE... CROSSED OVER.
SO MIXED UP!
PLEASE... DON'T BE KIND TO ME.

NAMING

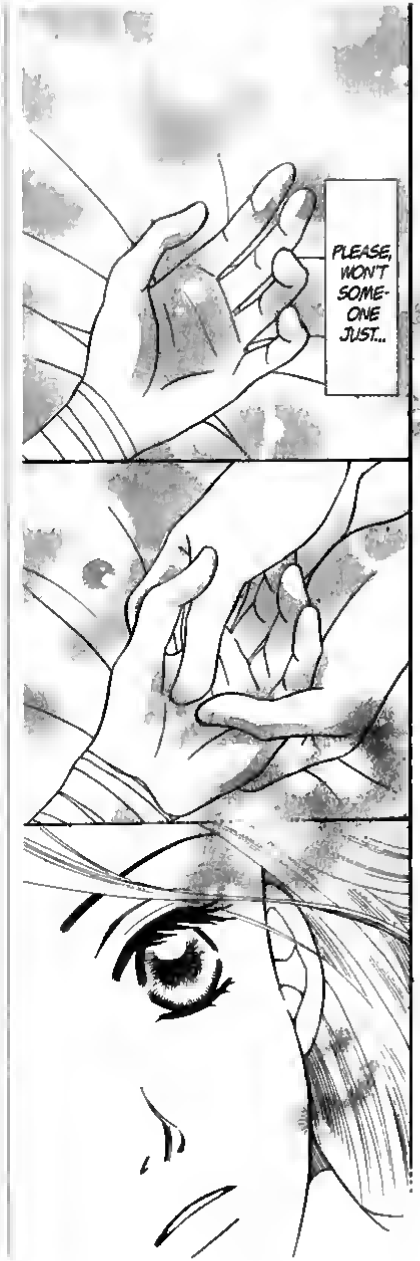
YŪ • RAKU • NONO

ALL THREE NAMES HAD A NICE RING TO THEM, SO THAT'S WHY I USED 'EM.

MY FRIEND'S YOUNGER SISTER'S OLDEST SON IS NAMED RAKU, SO I BORROWED IT. IT'S A FUN NAME.

I FEEL LIKE A NAME CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE. I GET EXCITED EVERY TIME FRIENDS OR ACQUAINTANCES HAVE TO COME UP WITH A NAME FOR THEIR NEWBORN BABY.

OCCASIONALLY, SOMEONE GETS HYSTERICAL...



YOU HAVE TO...
...YOU HAVE TO SHARE WHAT YOU FEEL.
IF YOU BOTTLE IT UP, IT HAS NOWHERE TO GO.
HUH...?
HE DIDN'T WANT THE POLICE AFTER YOU! HE SENT US.
I'M SORRY, KAZUKI. MR. TODA WAS THE ONE WHO SENT US TO YOU.
HE SENT US TO YOU!

"YOU WORK SO HARD I ADMIRE THAT."
THAT WAS ALL IT TOOK FOR ME TO FALL FOR HIM.
I WAS SUCH A DORK. I TOOK ON ALL THE TASKS THAT NO ONE ELSE WANTED TO DO.
ONE DAY, TODA SAID TO ME...
IVE DREAMT OF HIM...
...EVER SINCE...
...I WAS BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL.
I'D TALK TO HIM IN MY MIND, AND EXPLAIN WHY IT SHOULD BE ME.
OVER AND OVER, LIKE I COULDN'T STOP.
BUT WHO COULD I TELL?
IT HURT SO MUCH.
SO I HELD IT IN. I JUST HELD IT IN.
I WAS IN LOVE.
BUT WE WERE FRIENDS, SO HOW COULD I TELL HIM?
THEN HE STARTED GOING OUT WITH SOME-ONE.

"YOU HAVE TO SHARE WHAT YOU FEEL."
TMP
SHE'S SO BUSY FEELING SORRY FOR OTHERS, AND THEN SHE GETS HURT. IT'S NUTS!
SO THAT'S WHY YOU'RE ALL JITTERY THESE DAYS.
SHE'S VISITING THAT NUTTY WOMAN AGAIN!
SO WHERE IS YŪ OFF TO?
ATING GENCY

MR. TODA WANTED TO GIVE YOU A NEW FUTURE...
AFTER CRYING HER EYES OUT...
...TO SET YOU FREE...
...WITHOUT CAUSING YOUR POOR HEART ANY MORE PAIN.
...SHE SAID SHE'D RETURN TO HER FAMILY...
...AND START LIFE ANEW.

I'M FINE NOW.
I'LL BE ALL RIGHT. REALLY, I WILL.
I CAN FIGHT IT ON MY OWN.
IT'S TIME YOU MOVED ON.
ISN'T THERE SOMEONE ELSE YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT NOW?
GO ON. GO TO HER!
DO YOU NEED ME TO PUSH YOU? IS THAT IT?

MPH!
I hope not.
...YOU'RE STILL HUNG UP OVER ME?
AM I RIGHT?
OR IS IT THAT...
THAT WAS THREE YEARS AGO. I'M TOTALLY OVER IT!
The folly of youth!
...I MADE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT I JUST WASN'T ATTRACTED TO YOU AT ALL! NOPE! NO WAY!
NO HOPE!
CRYSTAL
CLEAR
I'M NOT INTO YOU ANYMORE, ANYWAY!
IT'S NOT JUST MY FEAR OF MEN! IT'S NOT!
Nono tells of her past...
BACK WHEN I WAS IN THE SEVENTH GRADE...
YOU MUST KNOW BY NOW!
YOU DIDN'T WANT TO LET ME SUFFER ALONE.
YOU'RE TOO KIND, RAKU.
...YOU STILL WANTED TO BE THERE FOR ME, RIGHT?
AND YET YOU...

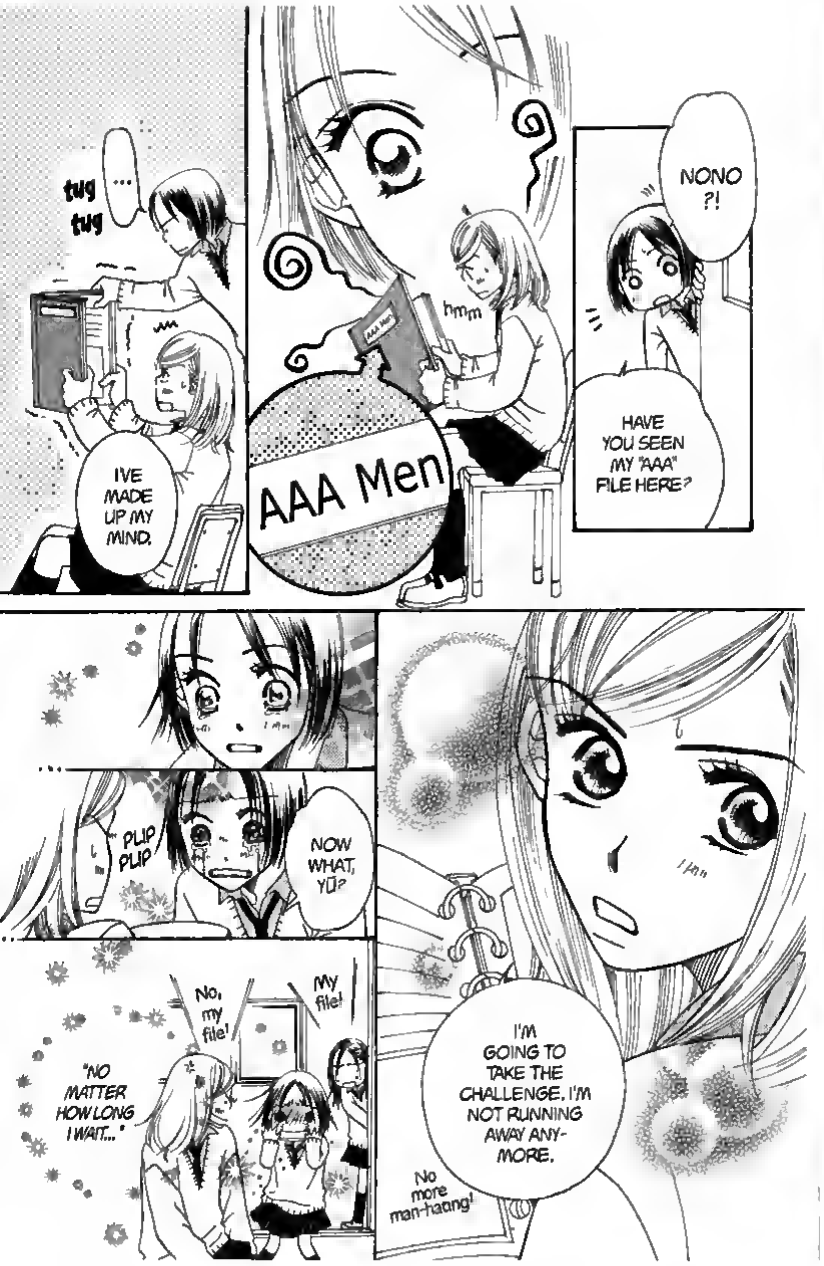
...I WANT YOU NEXT TO ME!
...I NEED TO SAY!
SOME-THING I NEED TO TELL YOU...!
RAKU?! IS THAT REALLY YOU?! THERE'S SOME-THING...
...I KNOW.

TMP
NO. IT'S OKAY. I CAN DO IT ON MY OWN.
SO MANY THINGS TO COPE WITH ON YOUR OWN.
AND YET...
I KNOW THAT NOW.
SO MANY HURTS...
...THAT'S WHY...
I KNOW IT WITH ALL MY HEART.
...AND NO ONE CAN RESCUE YOU!

I LOVE YOU.
I MEAN IT...
...I REALLY DO...
...LOVE...
...Y--

I CAN FEEL IT.

"I WANT
YOU
NEXT
TO
ME..."

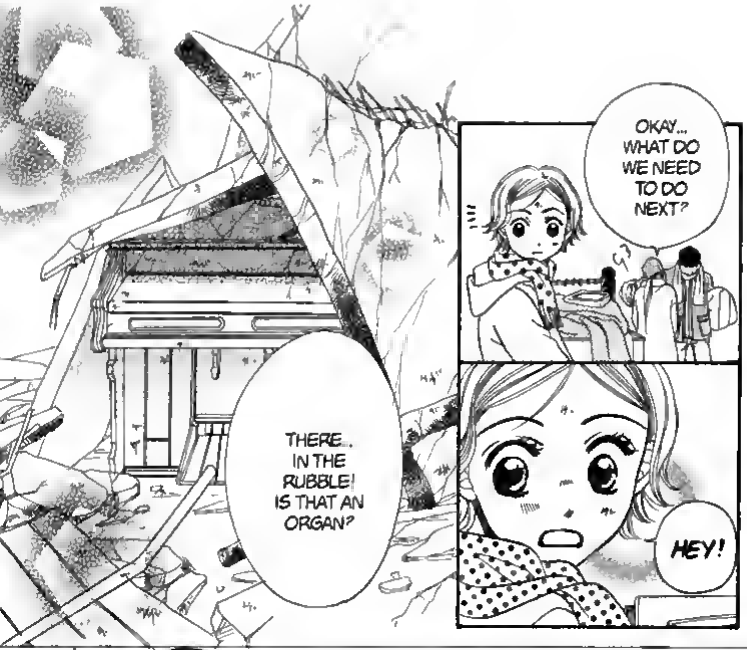

tug tug
...
I'VE MADE UP MY MIND.
AAA Men
hmm
NONO ?!
HAVE YOU SEEN MY "AAA" FILE HERE?
PLIP PLIP
NOW WHAT, YŪ?
"NO MATTER HOW LONG I WAIT..."
No, my file!
My file!
I'M GOING TO TAKE THE CHALLENGE. I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY ANY-MORE.
No more man-hating!

DATING ENCY
ZB
ZB WB
WB
ING NC
ALL RIGHT! SQUEAKY CLEAN!
...NO! TIME TO HELP FOLKS!
TIME TO MAKE MORE MONEY...
Let's go!
PHEW!
MR. TODA WON'T REPORT US TO THE SCHOOL. HE'S LOOKING THE OTHER WAY.
All set!
OOH!
THANK YOU SO MUCH!
I'VE GOT A "TRIPLE-A BEAUTIFUL MEN" LIST FOR YOU TODAY!
WAIT... HM?
YŪ! HERE I AM!
Oh, boy!
WE'RE ALL SET FOR YOU, AIKO!

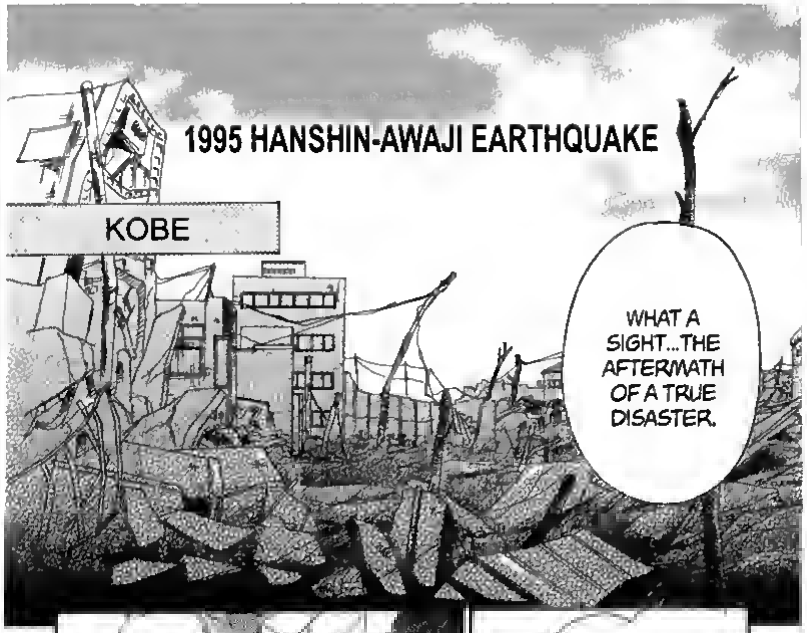
That Sweet Organ Song

N-NONO STOLE MY...!!
"LOVE JUST WON'T FIND ME."
IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE YOU...
Library Club
DATING AGENCY
...DON'T GIVE UP! VISIT OUR CLUB!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO COPE WITH LIFE ALL ON YOUR OWN ANY LONGER.. OUR DEVOTED STAFF IS HERE FOR YOU!

THE END


OKAY... WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO NEXT?
THERE.. IN THE RUBBLE! IS THAT AN ORGAN?
HEY!

DECEMBER 1922
KOBE
I'LL BE RIGHT OVER!
OH, SETSU? COME HERE!
I NEED YOU TO GO PICK UP SOME THINGS.
HONDA BOOKS
STATIONERY AND BOOKSTORE


1995 HANSHIN-AWAJI EARTHQUAKE
KOBE
WHAT A SIGHT...THE AFTERMATH OF A TRUE DISASTER.

IT MAKES ME WANNA CRY.
CAN THIS REALLY BE KOBE?
WOW... it's like WWII.
WOW. THE CHURCH NEXT DOOR HAS BEEN COMPLETELY DEMOLISHED.
COME ON, KIDS... LET'S SALVAGE WHAT WE CAN.

POEMS
I'LL TAKE THIS RIGHT BACK!
A BOOK OF POEMS?
STAY WARM!
OH!
SO COLD!
HAVE TO GET HOME!
SO COLD!
BRR
NOW!
I MUST TURN THIS FEELING..
..INTO A POEM!
I FEEL A CREATIVE BURST COMING ON!
OH!
AH!
FWSH
AHA!
SNOW!

WUMP
OH!
I'M ON MY WAY NOW!
Be careful!
YOU KNOW WHERE THAT IS?
IN THE FOREIGN QUARTER?
YES, I SURE DO!
POEMS
FWSH
HEY! YOU DROPPED SOME-THING...
I'M SO SORRY! PLEASE ACCEPT MY HUMBLE APOLOGY!

WHY ARE YOU SO DELICIOUS? STEAMED OR BAKED, I'D...
IT ALMOST MAKES ME FORGET MY CURRENT DESPAIR!
OH SWEET POTATO!
SOB
SOMEONE'S PLAYING IT IN THE CHURCH! WOW, SUCH A PRETTY SONG.
SLAM
HEY!

DID I DROP IT?
WHAT?
MY NOTE-BOOK!
WHAT?
WHAT?
HMM!
TSH FSH
WAAAH!
ESPECIALLY THE "POTATO POEM" I CAME UP WITH YESTERDAY!
sweet potato
IF ANYONE READS IT, I'LL JUST DIE!
WHAT DO I DO?!
IT'S COMING FROM OVER THERE -
"SWEET POTATO" BY SETSU
OH, SWEET POTATO!
WHY ARE YOU SO DELICIOUS?
STEAMED OR BAKED,
I'D DIE HAPPY IF I
COULD DROWN IN YOUR
AMBROSIAL
AROMA!
THAT SOUND... IS IT AN ORGAN?
SOB
Oh! The shame!

THAT GUY IS SUCH A JERK!!
wham
FIRE-BALL?
MORE LIKE A SHREW.
SHE'S A REAL FIREBALL!
MRS. CARTER. HI...
OH! I AM SO VERY SORRY! OH!
MY BOOKS!
STOP IT NOW, SETSU!
BAM
WAM
AAGH!
JERK! JERK! JERK!
EXCUSE ME? CAN I BUY THIS?
I'D LIKE THIS.
I REALLY DID IT THIS TIME!
AND IT'S ALL HIS FAULT!

HAH! THIS IS A POEM?
GIVE ME BACK MY BOOK!
WAP
YOU STOLE MY POEM TO MAKE YOUR STUPID SONG!
HOW DARE YOU?!
VIP
IT'S ONLY A HOBBY!
BWA HA HA HA
YOU DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES!
YOU'RE PLANNING TO BE SOME GREAT POET?
SLAM
GIVE ME A BREAK! FINDERS KEEPERS!
MEH MEH MEH
..I'M GOING TO BE A SCHOOL-TEACHER, IF YOU MUST KNOW!
WHEN I GROW UP..

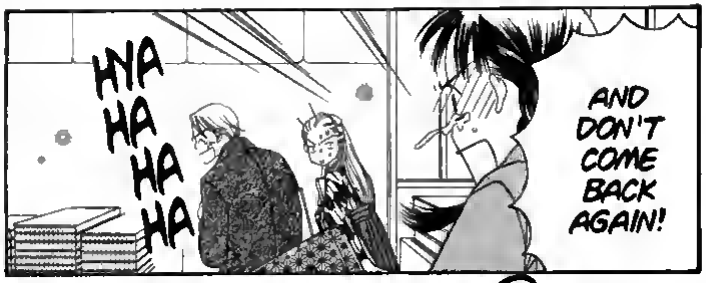
HEY...
...
VIP
...
OKAY! IF THAT WILL BE ALL...
Thanks
IS THAT SHOTARO? HOW ODD!
FLIP
SO, YOU WORK HERE?
URGH!
YEAH! SHE'S AN UP-AND-COMING POET!
YOU KNOW HER?
OH... HOW ARE YOU...
...CHIKAGE ?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?
FAP
FAP
FAP
FAP
"OH, SWEET POTATO! WHY ARE YOU SO..."

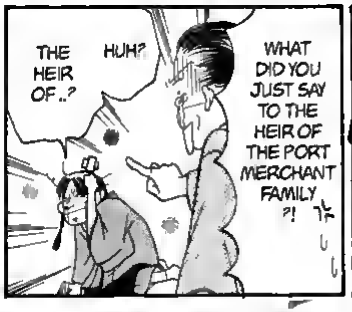
...AND A MAROON KILT.
ARROW PATTERNED KIMONO...
A RIBBON AROUND HER CHIGNON...
OH...
IT'S 80 SEN.
YES.
WHOA ...
WHAT A RITZY GIRL!
ooh la la
...I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO STUDY IN HIGH SCHOOL.
OH, IS THAT SO?
OH, IT'S JUST THAT...
It's no big deal.
WHAT? NEVER SEEN A FEMALE STUDENT ?
I'll be a good wife!
..I SURE WOULDN'T WANT TO BECOME SOME BRAINY OLD SPINSTER.
AS FOR ME..
I WOULDN'T MIND BEING BRAINY. I WANT TO STUDY.
..GIRLS' SCHOOLS ONLY SERVE TO TRAIN GOOD WIVES AND MOTHERS.
SCIENCE, MATH...
...ENGLISH, HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY... ALL THESE SUBJECTS, AND YET...

HONDA BOOKS
STATIONERY AND BOOKSTORE
UH OH
HE'S BACK AGAIN! WHAT NERVE!
SO, HOW MUCH IS THIS ONE?

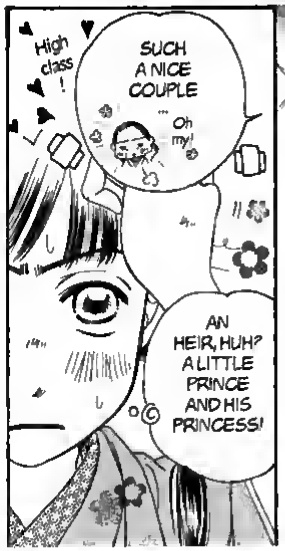
HOW COULD THIS FLIMSY BOOK COST THREE AND A HALF YEN?!
A joke!
WOW!
FWIP
WHY HOW VERY KIND OF YOU!
THANKS!
OKAY.
THREE AND A HALF YEN.
TINK TINK
I'LL GET HIM NOW!

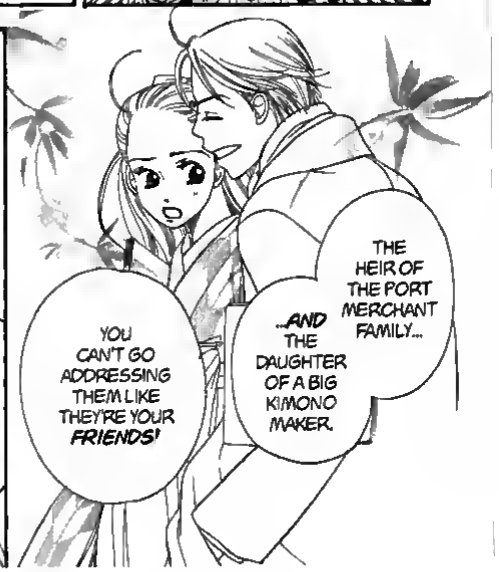
BRAT.
SO WHAT?
Take that!
DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
AHEM
A RESPECTABLE JOB!
I'M GOING TO TEACH SCHOOL ONE DAY.
SO I CAN'T SELL THIS TO YOU.
It's 30 sen.
You go too far
WHY YOU...
YOU'RE SUCH A SPOILED KID!
BE MORE CAREFUL!
GAAH
He didn't get my joke!
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW THE VALUE OF BOOKS!


HYA HA HA HA
AND DON'T COME BACK AGAIN!


THE HEIR OF..?
HUH?
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY TO THE HEIR OF THE PORT MERCHANT FAMILY?!

KA S K R AK


High class!
SUCH A NICE COUPLE
... Oh my!
AN HEIR, HUH? A LITTLE PRINCE AND HIS PRINCESS!


YOU CAN'T GO ADDRESSING THEM LIKE THEY'RE YOUR FRIENDS!
...AND THE DAUGHTER OF A BIG KIMONO MAKER.
THE HEIR OF THE PORT MERCHANT FAMILY...

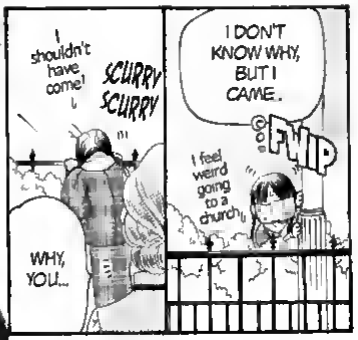
I WROTE THAT SONG!
THAT SONG ...?
YOU?
I'M AT THE CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY...
I PLAY A LOT.
He's good.
YOU MEAN IT? FOR REAL?
WOW!
Huh ?
WISH
SEE YOU!
...SO YOU'D BETTER COME!

...WOW..
WHAT ABOUT YOU? ARE YOU GOING TO BE AN ORGANIST?
MY WISH WILL BE GRANTED THEN FOR SURE.
THE OWNER HERE'S A NICE MAN. HE SAID, "IF YOU WORK HARD I'LL SEND YOU TO A TEACHER'S SCHOOL."
YOU SAID THAT LAST TIME, TOO...BUT YOU'VE ONLY GRADUATED JUNIOR HIGH.
WELL, SO FAR.
IT'S NOT THAT HARD TO MASTER.
OH, REALLY...
THAT'S TOO BAD. YOU'RE SO GOOD AT IT.
I'M MY DAD'S ONLY HEIR! I CAN'T DO THAT!
I'VE GOT TO RUN THE FAMILY BUSINESS !
WHAT WAS THAT SONG YOU WERE PLAYING?
...BUT THE SONG WAS QUITE BEAUTIFUL.
MY POEM WAS HORRID...
Bye.
OH! THAT'S RIGHT.
SETSU !
She let one slip by...
UM! YES?

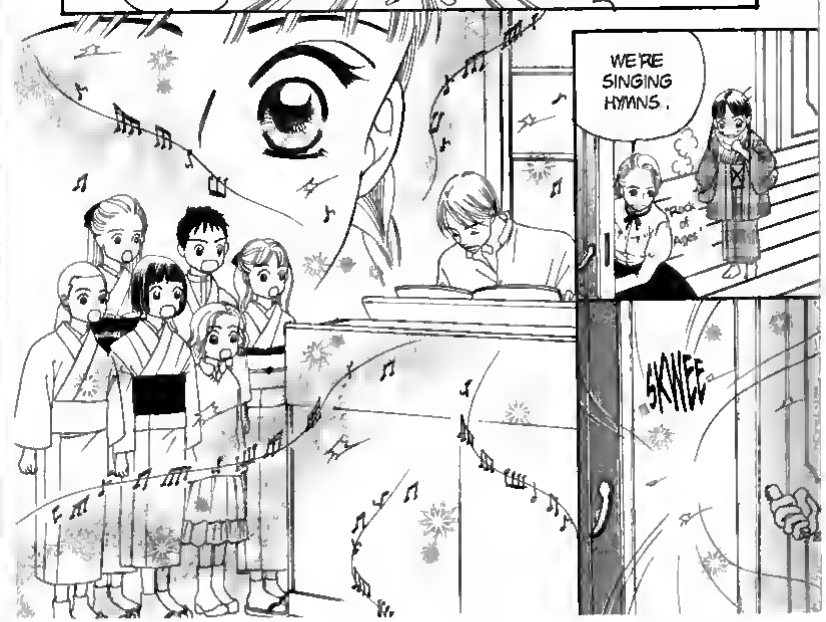
Minister's Wife
MRS. CARTER TEACHES ME THE ORGAN SOMETIMES.
I WANT TO COMPOSE MUSIC...
I help out here ...

THAT WAS SO LOVELY.

EEK!
A FOREIGNER !!
..YOU'RE THAT GIRL! COME ON IN!


I shouldn't have come!
SCURRY SCURRY
WHY, YOU...
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I CAME.
FWIP
I feel weird going to a church

THE CHURCH IS OPEN TO ALL. WE WON'T BITE!
PERFECT JAPANESE
tug tug
OH
HER BEST ENGLISH
NO !!
NO, NO! ME IS BUDDHIST!


WE'RE SINGING HYMNS.
Rock of Ages
SKWEE

I FEEL LIKE I COULD DO IT...IF I WERE WITH YOU!

...AND SHARE MY SONGS WITH FUTURE GENERATIONS.
SONGS THAT CAN BE PLAYED...
...OVER AND OVER, LONG AFTER I'M DEAD.
I WANTED TO GO TO MUSIC SCHOOL...
...BUT MY DAD WOULD NEVER LET ME.
WE HAVE VERY DIFFERENT LIVES.
BUT I...
...I'D LIKE TO SEE YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE.
WHEN YOU SHARE YOUR MUSIC WITH THE WORLD, I WANT TO BE AROUND TO WITNESS IT...
...I WANT TO SEE PEOPLE BEING TOUCHED BY YOUR MUSIC FOR THE FIRST TIME!

HIS FATHER DISOWNED HIM!
SAID HE WAS A NO-GOOD BUM!
WHAT?!
ALL I... ...EVER WANTED.. WAS TO BE HIS WIFE.
THAT WAS MY ONE DREAM ...SINCE I WAS A GIRL.
BUT— YOU!
THEN I'LL FIND A JOB AND SAVE UP FOR MUSIC SCHOOL.
I'LL STAY AT THE CHURCH FOR A WHILE.
HEY! SETSU!
IT'S NOT THAT EASY!
!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "HEY"?!
SHO-TARO!

FWMPSH
!
HONDA BOOKS
STATIONERY AND BOOKSTORE
WHAT DID YOU DO TO SHOTARO, YOU WITCH?!

❀ ON "ORGAN" ❀

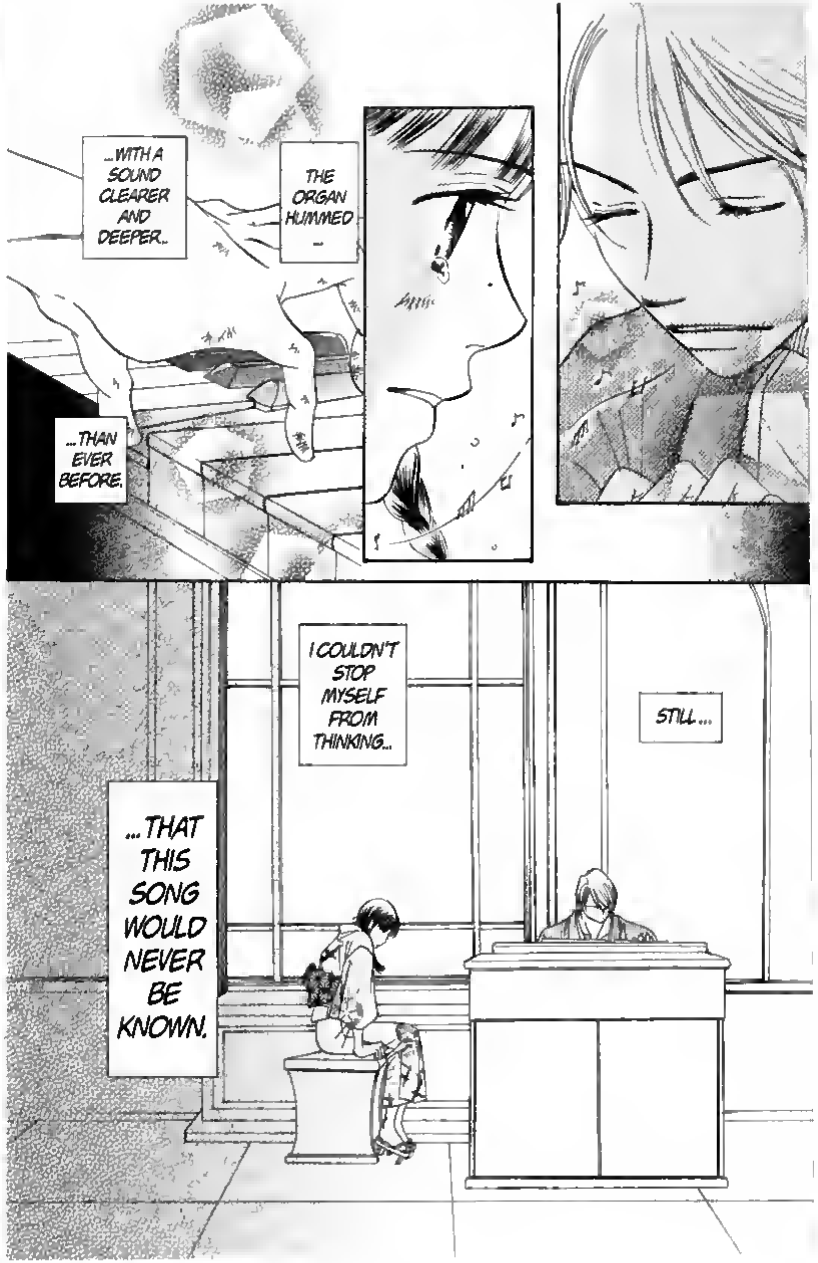
IT STARTED OUT AS A SIMPLE STORY ABOUT "A GIRL WHO PLAYS THE ORGAN"... BUT I KEPT ON REVISING IT, AND AFTER TALKING IT OVER WITH MY EDITOR, NEXT THING I KNOW IT'S SET DURING THE TAISHO PERIOD...

I FEEL LIKE THE HANSHIN EARTHQUAKE IS STILL A REALLY DELICATE TOPIC, SO I WASN'T SURE IT WAS PROPER FOR ME TO USE IT AS AN EPISODE FOR THIS STORY. I GOT SO UPSET WATCHING THE DESTRUCTION IN KOBE ON T.V., AND IT WAS FRUSTRATING THAT I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP

IT STILL FEELS RECENT, BUT EIGHT YEARS HAVE ALREADY PASSED. THERE'S A PLACE ON AWAJI ISLAND WHERE THE FAULT FORMED FROM THE EARTHQUAKE HAS BEEN PRESERVED. I WENT TO SEE IT RECENTLY WHEN I VISITED. WORDS CAN'T EXPRESS HOW I FELT WHEN I SAW IT...

...MY HANDS WERE GRIMY FROM WORK...
...WHILE HIS WERE WHITE AS PORCELAIN...
...LIKE HERS.
NO REASON AT ALL, BUT...
IF YOU CAN DO IT, THERE'S NO REASON I CAN'T.
POVERTY CAN STEAL ONE'S FREEDOM...
...AND CRUSH ONE'S DREAMS. I KNEW THAT BETTER THAN SHOTARO.
IT'S HARD TO SAVE MONEY..
But I'll keep at it!

WHY ARE YOU CRYING, SETSU? SUCH TEARS!
HAD I STOLEN THE HAPPINESS HE WAS MEANT TO INHERIT?
plip
plip
plip
HAD I RUINED HIS LIFE?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT...
Knew it!
MM?
I...
...WAS SO MOVED.
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO PLAY ONE.
AND I'LL GET PAID SOME, TOO!
I'M GOING TO HELP MOVE IT HERE!
A PIPE ORGAN?!
!!
It's nice!
THE CHURCH IN YOKOHAMA IS GOING TO DONATE ONE OF THEIRS!
OH?
I GOT SOME GOOD NEWS!
THIS CHURCH! IT'S GOING TO HAVE A PIPE ORGAN!


...WITH A SOUND CLEARER AND DEEPER..
THE ORGAN HUMMED
...THAN EVER BEFORE.
I COULDN'T STOP MYSELF FROM THINKING...
STILL...
...THAT THIS SONG WOULD NEVER BE KNOWN.

A GREAT INLAND EARTHQUAKE RAVAGED THE KANTO REGION..
SEPTEMBER 1, 1923
11:58 AM
HE WAS CRUSHED BENEATH THE PIPE ORGAN HE HAD LONGED FOR.
...AND SHOTARO COULD NOT ESCAPE.
...HE'D NEVER HAVE DIED THIS PATHETIC EXCUSE OF A DEATH!
IF HE HADN'T MET YOU...
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!

BE CARE-FUL!
I'LL SEE YOU!
BYE FOR NOW!
THAT'S REALLY GREAT!!
Isn't it?
...THE LAST TIME I EVER SAW HIM.
THAT WAS...

YOU CAN'T GET HUNG UP OVER A DEAD MAN.
THIS SUITOR HAS BEEN INFORMED OF EVERY-THING...
...AND YET HE'S FOND OF YOU.
BUT I...
SETSU!
WHAT ABOUT GOING TO TEACHER'S SCHOOL?
WAIT, SIR!
...I WANT TO STAY HERE!
AT THE VERY LEAST...
...YOU SHOULD LET HIM SAVE FACE. GIVE HIM A WAY OUT.
AFTER ALL HE'S DONE FOR YOU, SEE WHAT YOU DID TO HIM?
...HE NEEDS TO GET RID OF YOU.
THE STORE'S IN BIG TROUBLE BECAUSE OF YOU. THE OWNER...
DON'T YOU SEE?

WAAAH
YOU... ANGEL OF DOOM!
THE BOSS WANTS A WORD WITH YOU.
SETSU!
HONDA BOOKS
STATIONERY AND BOOKS
MARRIAGE? YOU THINK THAT I SHOULD...?
WHAT WAS THAT, SIR?

YOU'LL BE TAKEN CARE OF.
YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOURSELF BLESSED
SHOTARO ...!

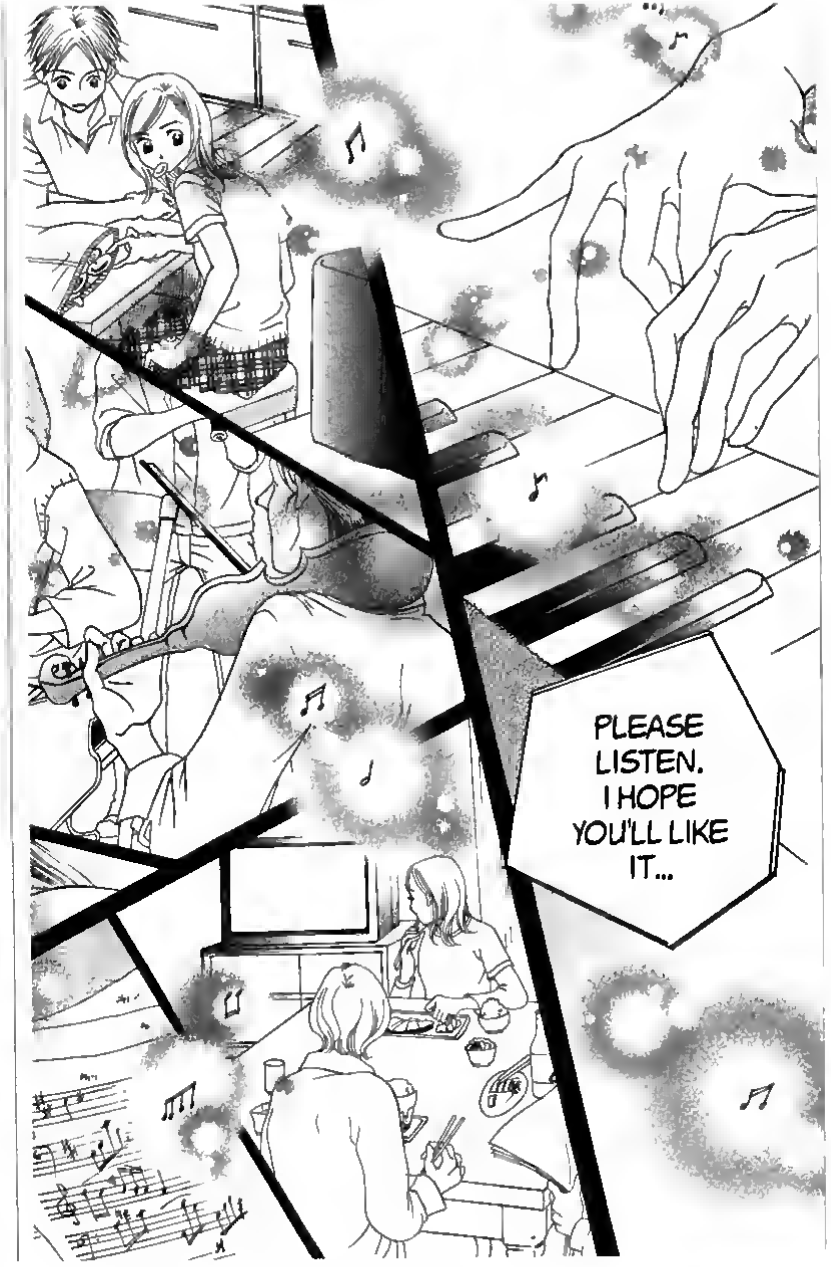
FANCY THINGS
TRAINS
ELECTRICITY
GAS
MANSIONS
FOREIGN TRAVEL
...NOW THAT IT'S OPENED UP TO THE WEST, AND YET...
EVERYONE CLAIMS IT'S A NEW DAWN FOR JAPAN, WITH NEW FREEDOM...
MY, MY...
...WHAT A SWEETLY BEAUTIFUL BRIDE SHE IS! JUST LOOK...

IS IT TRUE, GRANDMA SETSU ?!
MUST BE HARD FOR HER..
WASN'T YOUR GRANDMA SETSU IN KOBE BEFORE SHE GOT MARRIED?
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!
ALL OF IT.
IT IS ALL OVER NOW...
WHAT?
She needs a hearing aid!
IT IS...
NO GOOD. SHE CAN'T HEAR. At all!
...EVERY LAST BIT... IS GONE.
MY DREAMS ...
...MY PAST, MY FUTURE...
ALL OF IT...
...NEXT WE HAVE THIS STORY ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER EFFORT...

...THIS COUNTRY...
...HASN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
OSAKA 1995
WHAT A TRAGEDY! I NEVER THOUGHT WE'D SEE KOBE IN SUCH A STATE...
EVEN SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THE QUAKE...
...THERE ARE MANY IN THE SHELTERS WHO HAVE NO PLACE TO GO...

A LOVE SONG.
AND I FOUND THIS OLD MUSIC SCORE.
I'D NEVER HEARD OF IT BEFORE, BUT...
..IT'S VERY SAD AND BEAUTIFUL.
I'VE BEEN PRACTICING IT SO I COULD SHARE IT WITH EVERYONE OUT THERE!

THANK YOU! SO MUCH!
MANY VOLUNTEERS HELPED US OUT.
NOW WE HAVE A ROOF OVERHEAD!
YOU'RE ALSO A VICTIM OF THIS QUAKE?
YES! MY HOME IS GONE!
KEI NANAKURA, LEADER OF HER HIGH SCHOOL BAND, HAS BEEN VISITING SHELTERS, OFFERING HOPE.
tik tik tik tik
SOUNDS LIKE A STATE SPEECH!
SHE'S CUTE.
SUCH A GOOD GIRL...
IT'S SO SAD...
...I'D LIKE TO DO MY PART TO HELP OTHERS, TOO!
AND SO...
NOT EVEN THE EARTHQUAKE COULD HURT IT.
HMP
I got permission from the minister!
WHAT INSPIRED HER WAS AN ORGAN.
URG!
UNGH!
YES! I FOUND IT IN THE CHURCH THAT FELL!


PLEASE LISTEN. I HOPE YOU'LL LIKE IT...

ARE YOU OKAY?!
OH...
IT'S ALL RIGHT, GRANDMA.
DO YOU HEAR IT...?
GRANDMA SETSU... WHAT'S WRONG?!
...SHOTARO?

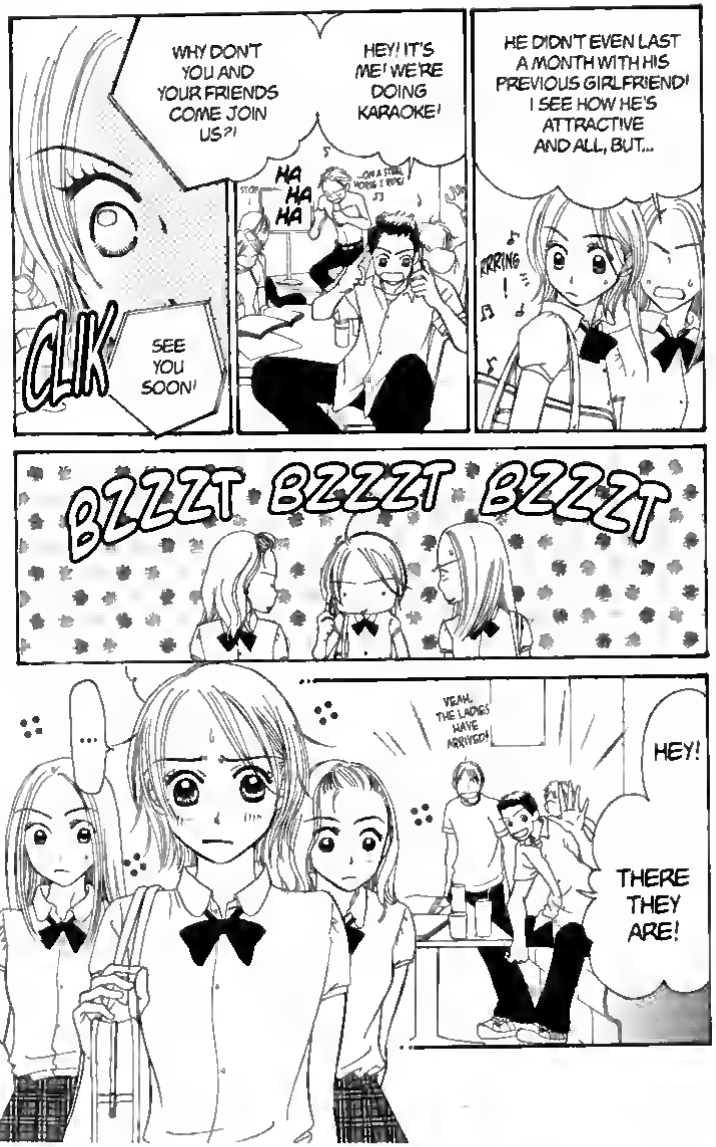
SUCH A LOVELY TUNE. I WONDER WHO WROTE IT...?
WOW... NICE!
WISH GRANDMA COULD HEAR IT.
"I WANT TO SHARE MY SONGS WITH FUTURE GENERATIONS."
"SONGS THAT CAN BE PLAYED..."
"...OVER AND OVER, LONG AFTER I'M DEAD."

THE EASY LIFE

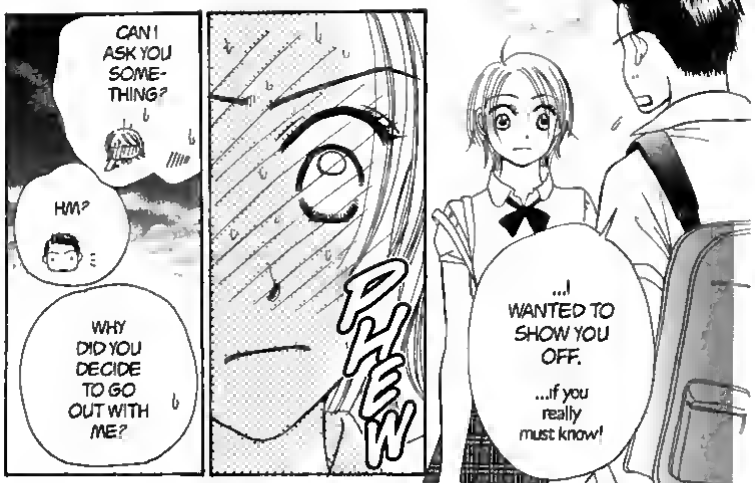
...IT'S STILL HERE, AFTER ALL...
YOUR ORGAN SONG, SO FULL OF HOPES AND DREAMS ...
...OUR LOVE SONG... ECHOING THROUGH THE CITY OF KOBE.
STAY TUNED FOR CONTINUING COVERAGE FROM THIS SCENE OF DEVASTATION
THE END

SURE...
...I-IF YOU'D LIKE TO GO OUT WITH ME...
S-SO... IF YOU...
CAN LIFE...
...WORK OUT SO EASILY? CAN IT REALLY?
...IF YOU THINK I'M GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU.
NO PROBLEM!
THE EASY LIFE!
The End

FWAK
HE WAS SOMEONE I HAD ALWAYS ADORED. I DIDN'T WANT...
...SOME OTHER GIRL TO GET HIM FIRST, SO...
YOU KNOW, I... I'VE ALWAYS... LIKED YOU...
NICE!


WHY DON'T YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS COME JOIN US?!
HEY! IT'S ME! WE'RE DOING KARAOKE!
HE DIDN'T EVEN LAST A MONTH WITH HIS PREVIOUS GIRLFRIEND! I SEE HOW HE'S ATTRACTIVE AND ALL, BUT...
CLIK
SEE YOU SOON!
HA HA HA
RRRING!
BZZZT BZZZT BZZZT
...
YEAH, THE LADIES HAVE ARRIVED!
HEY!
THERE THEY ARE!

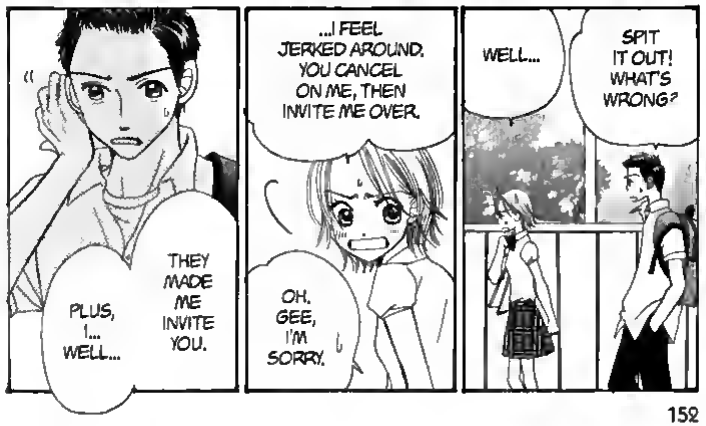
SO YOU'RE NOT GONNA WALK HOME WITH ME AGAIN TODAY?!
AGAIN?
BUT...
THAT'S HOW IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE
BOYS VOLLEYBALL CLUB
NEXT TIME, I PROMISE.
Let's go!
You...!
SORRY, BUT I PROMISED I'D GO OUT WITH THE TEAM.
He's so selfish!
YOHEI'S BEEN JERKING YOU AROUND LIKE THIS SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING!
IS HE THAT BAD?
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE HAS THE NERVE!
HE DID THAT TO YOU?


CAN I ASK YOU SOME-THING?
HM?
WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO GO OUT WITH ME?
PHEW
...I WANTED TO SHOW YOU OFF.
...if you really must know!

MY LAST GIRLFRIEND WAS ALWAYS PRETTY SNAPPISH.
SO I DECIDED THAT THE NEXT GIRL I WENT OUT WITH WOULD HAVE TO BE KIND.
WE'RE NOT CLASSMATES... WE DON'T PLAY THE SAME SPORTS...
IT WAS THAT...
...YOU SEEMED TO BE...SO KIND.

COME ON! HAVE A SEAT!
HEY, YOHEI... YOU KNOW--
WANT A DRINK?

SO, I...
YOU KNOW, YOU...


PLUS, I... WELL...
THEY MADE ME INVITE YOU.
...I FEEL JERKED AROUND. YOU CANCEL ON ME, THEN INVITE ME OVER.
OH. GEE, I'M SORRY.
WELL...
SPIT IT OUT! WHAT'S WRONG?

SO WHERE IS MOM?
STILL AT WORK! LATE!
SCUT CRUT CRUT
IF YOU'RE SO HUNGRY, MAKE DINNER YOURSELF...
MAKE ME DINNER! I'M STARVING!
A kid needs food!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
YOU'RE AWFUL LATE, MAM!
Grade 5
JUST MAKE ME MY DINNER, YOU SILLY OLD GEEZER!
MNCH MNCH
CRNCH CRNCH CRNCH
IDIOT! I CAN'T COOK! NO WAY!
fump
KLIK
SIGH
TWITCH TWITCH
KILL
KA
POW

SO...
Yeah...
SWOON
WUMP
SPINE-LESS
MOM... I'M HOME ...
GOOD NIGHT, MAM!

My sweetie.
AS LONG AS I STAY HAPPY, PUTTING UP WITH HIM IS...NO BIG DEAL.
Hi!
That was quick.
Hey, thanks.
IT'S NO...
Can you grab some food for us? Yohei
I CAN PUT UP WITH THIS...
What? Gone already?!
TMD TMD
TMD
Hello?
Hey!
Sew this for me.
...BIG DEAL

..I'LL FORGIVE HIM.
EVEN IF HE'S SELFISH...
I'LL FORGIVE HIM!
IT'S NO GOOD.
WAP WAP WAP WAP WAP
SORRY !
YOU... YOU CAN'T GO? AGAIN ?!
I'M GOING TO BE HAPPY!!
OH...IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
I'LL MAKE UP FOR IT!
IT'S OKAY. NO BIG DEAL.
WHAT ?
2-1

YOU ARE SO NAIVE ...
HE TOLD ME...
...IT WAS OUR SPECIAL DAY!
OH! BUT HE...
...PROMISED TO SPEND MY BIRTHDAY NEXT MONTH WITH ME!
HE NEVER THINKS OF A SINGLE SOUL! JUST HIMSELF!
GLARE
HISH
HISH
HISH
HISH
HISH
HE JUST WANTS A GIRL WHO'LL WAIT ON HIM HAND AND FOOT!
I HAVE FAITH IN HIM!
HE SAID IT WAS OUR DAY!
HE SWORE IT! HE DID!
NO!
IT CAN'T BE!
YOU'RE MAID #2!
THERE IS NO LOVE IN HIM!
THAT'S YOHEI'S EX.
eek.
WHO?

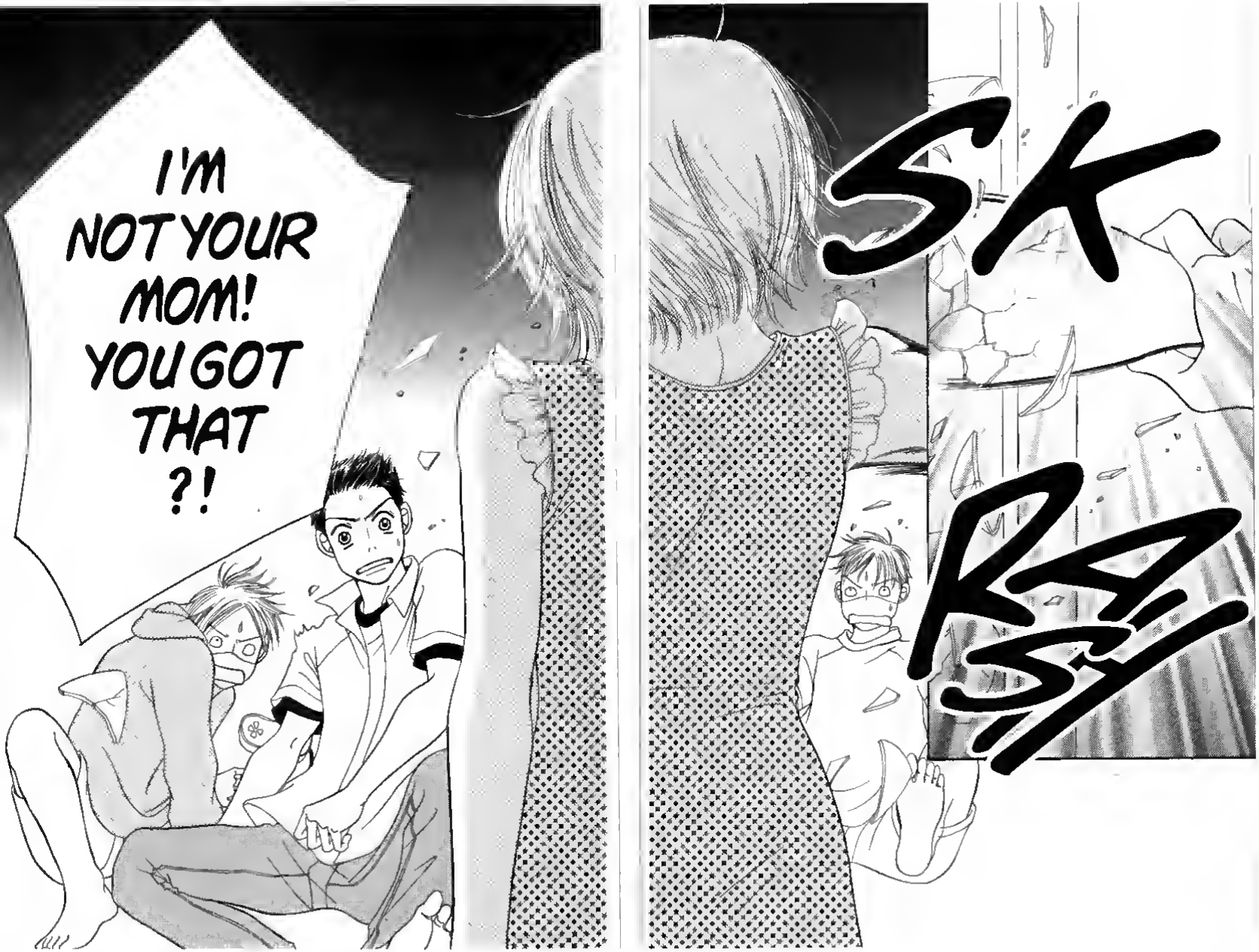
JERK!!
AH!
HUH?
DID WE REALLY MAKE PLANS TO DO THAT?
I don't recall that at all.
RGHH...
YOU'RE JUST BEING USED! YOU CAN'T PUT UP WITH THIS!
YOU SHOULD SPLIT UP WITH HIM.
EWAD
...
60!
AND WHEN HE APOLOGIZES LIKE A LITTLE KID, WHAT CAN I SAY?
And he's so hot.
YOU'VE FALLEN UNDER HIS SPELL ...
IT'S HARD, AFTER WHAT HE SAID...
MY LAST GIRLFRIEND WAS PRETTY SNAPPISH.
IT'S TOO LATE TO BUG HIM NOW.

I so sorree ...
WAAAH
WAAAH
AH AH AH AH AH AH
GRUP
Playing video games in my room. Pick up food on your way here
Yohei Minami

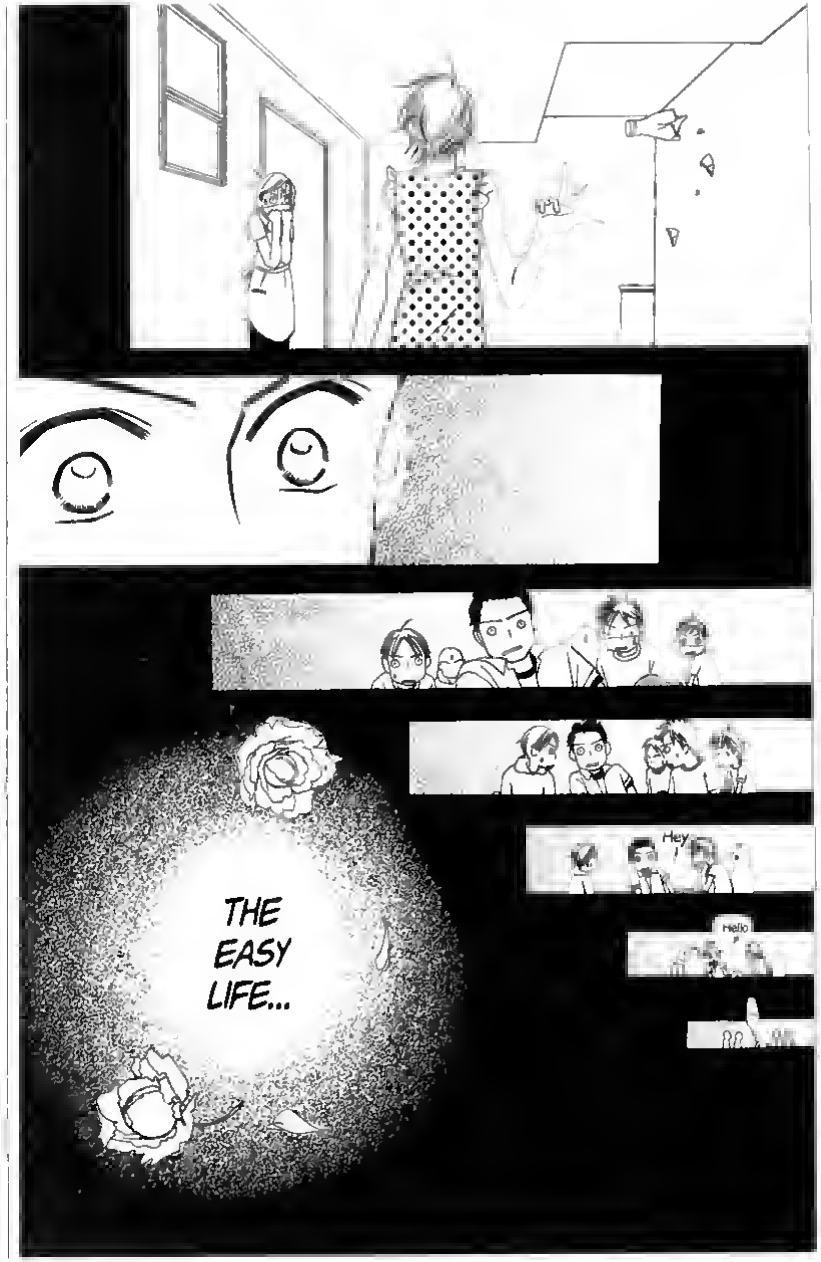
HE PROMISED ME!
SIS
MOM
BRO
Saturday
Sunday
5
6
MY BIRTHDAY!
12
13
HE BLEW YOU OFF! LAME!
NYAAH
NYAH NYAH
YOU'RE SUCH A LOSER!
STOP, KOTA!
THE DEMON BLEW HER OFF. HE WENT TO THE ALL-STAR GAME INSTEAD.
WH...WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER?

No prob!
GET IT YOUR-SELF...
...IF YOU'RE NOT TOO SPOILED TO WALK THAT FAR!
TUP TUP TUP TUP TUP TUP
HUH?
MY LITTLE BROTHER ACTS LIKE YOU...
...BUT AT LEAST HE'S STILL IN THE FIFTH GRADE, YOU SELFISH PRICK!

BING BONG
The Minamis
OH!
Let's see... Mami, right?
NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
GYA HA HA
HIS FRIENDS ARE UPSTAIRS WITH HIM.
Stop it!
OKAY.
OH, HERE SHE IS!
GYA HA HA
Hey, Mami!
You jerk.
Hey, what was that?!
ZAP ZAP
TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH, DIDN'T IT?
MOM! HEY, MOM!
CAN YOU GET FOOD FOR US!
AND MAKE IT FAST!
Sorry, ma'am.
WHAT DID YOU PICK UP?
YOU MEAN YOU ...?
JEEZ! WHAT A MESS!


I'M NOT YOUR MOM! YOU GOT THAT ?!
SK RA SH

WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT YESTER-DAY?
WHA ...?
FIGURE IT OUT ON YOUR OWN.
DON'T YOU GET IT?
2
YOU DID IT!
YOU SPLIT UP WITH HIM AT LAST!
HEY!
HOLD ON, YOU!
HEY!
TMSH
HEY, YOU!


THE EASY LIFE...
Hey
Hello

...
PIP
HEY! WHO'S THAT GUY?
Yohei Minami
090XXXXXXX
A GIRL OF EASY VIRTUE, THAT'S YOU!
Oh!
SO, YOU FOUND SOMEONE ELSE?!
I'M HOME!
TMP TMP TMP TMP TMP
SKWRRRK
HEY!
CLIK
AND CLIK
POWER OFF

ME?
CAN'T I FALL FOR SOMEONE TOGETHER, LIKE HORIE?
ARGH! WHAT BAD TASTE IN MEN!
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE WE TALKED IT OVER OR ANYTHING, BUT...
Can't you be pals?
Um ...
YES. TOO FAR BACK.
WE GO AS FAR BACK AS "SWIM SCHOOL."
Is that so?
Oh?
WE CAN'T DATE.
YEAH.
IS THAT A JOKE?
WANNA GO OUT?
RRRING
TODAY IS YOUR TUTORING DAY, HUH?
Brother
He needs it!
I'LL WALK YOU HOME. I HAVE TO DROP BY YOUR HOUSE ANYWAY.
Is that okay?

HOW ABOUT CALLING ME BACK, JERK?
PIP
IT'S ME, YOHEI. WHO'S THAT GUY?!
PIP
I KNOW YOU'RE THERE, MAMI!
PIP
WHY DID YOU TAKE HIM HOME?!
PIP
OH, NO! I LEFT MY PHONE OFF.
YOU HAVE FIVE NEW MESSAGES.
tmp
...COME ON, PLEASE?
MAMI...
...
I KEEP THINKING, "I HATE HIM"...
YOU HAVE NO MORE MESSAGES.

AIEEEE! HORIE!
HI, KOTA!
HORIE'S A GOOD GUY, BUT HE'S GOT A DARK STREAK...
Not my type.
Thank you.
No! He'll kill me!
FAP
FIP
BWA HA HA HA HA!
READY TO HAVE A FUN DAY OF STUDY?!
...WHEN I CAN'T DO THE SAME FOR THE GUY I LOVE?
WHY CAN I OVER-LOOK A FRIEND'S FAULTS...

✿ THE EASY LIFE ✿

THIS IS A REALISTIC STORY ABOUT A GIRL JERKED AROUND BY A SELF-CENTERED BOY. I DON'T THINK YOU CAN CHANGE SOMEONE'S PERSONALITY VERY EASILY, BUT THE PROTAGONIST WILL PROBABLY KEEP ON TRYING. GOOD LUCK, GIRL!

MY ASSISTANT SAID, "WHOA, I COULDN'T STAND A GUY LIKE HIM!" SHE SERIOUSLY ABHORRED HIM. I FEEL THE SAME WAY.

✿

SO THAT MAKES THREE STORIES. I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED THEM, AND I HOPE YOU'LL SEEK OUT MORE OF MY COMICS IN THE FUTURE! SEE YOU AGAIN (SOON, I HOPE)!

HINAKO ASHIHARA ✿
12/22/02

LOVE IS SUCH A MESS.
...BUT I FEEL THIS ACHE.
YOU HAVE 10 NEW MESSAGES
Ten ?!
HEY.
THE WIRELESS CUSTOMER YOU HAVE DIALED IS AWAY FROM THE PHONE OR TEMPORARILY OUT OF THE SERVICE AREA
CHK
MAMI! YOU'RE NOT THINKING STRAIGHT...

AH!
YOU HAVE ONE NEW MESSAGE.
IT'S ME...
...YOHEI.
I'VE...
...BEEN THINKING ABOUT EVERY-THING...
...
?
...
...
I'M SORRY.
?

YOU HAVE NO NEW MESSAGES.
...
NO NEW MESSAGES.
KLIK
NO NEW MESSAGES.
NO NEW MESSAGES.
NO NEW MESSAGES
I DIDN'T HEAR FROM HIM AT ALL. BUT THEN...
AND SO IT ENDED.
YOU HAVE NO NEW MESSAGES

UNNH
HAVEN'T BEEN GETTING MUCH SLEEP...
OH... YES.
ARE YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK PALE.
NEXT! GROUP A!

YOU HAVE NO MORE MESSAGES.
AND FROM THEN ON...
...IT WAS TRUE.
I HAD NO MORE CALLS.
YOU'RE BETTER OFF WITHOUT HIM...
TAKE YOUR TIME.
THAT'S RIGHT. THERE'S PLENTY OF FISH IN THE SEA!
...SO I SAY, "GOOD FOR YOU!"
YEAH ...
JUST BE CAREFUL... AND CHOOSE WISELY!

THEY SAID YOU NEED MORE REST.
You hit your head.
YOHEI...
Ow!
?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
ME
?
Horie
YEAH, HIM.
HIM?
YOU WERE PROBABLY THINKING OF THAT GUY.
..HERE.
SPLIP
UM... YOHEI?
HE'S NOT LIKE ME AT ALL, IS HE...?

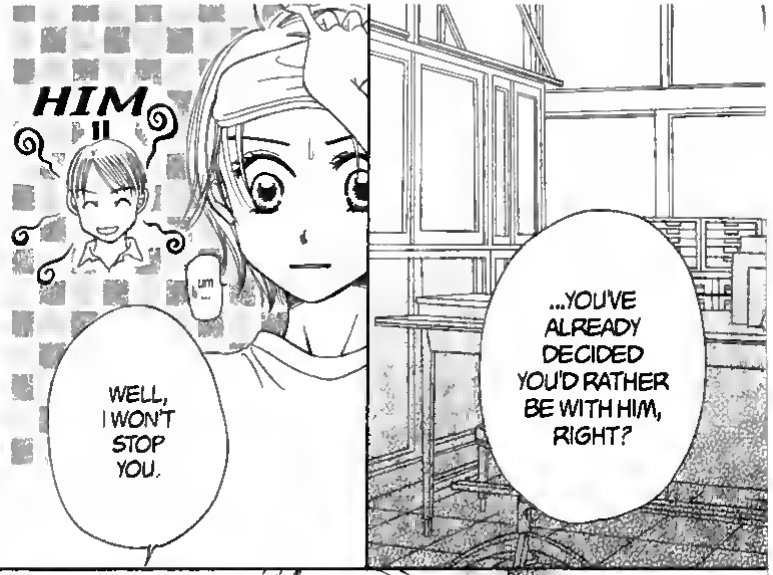
HEY!
MAMI!
AAAH!
MAMI ...
I COULD HEAR YOHEI'S VOICE, FROM A DISTANCE.
NURS

...I GUESS I'VE JUST BEEN SPOILED ROTTEN.
IT'S LAME TO SAY, BUT...
BUT...
...TOO LATE.
WFF
I THINK I CAN CHANGE, IF IT'S NOT...

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO WRING IT OUT FIRST.
FUP
FSSHH
SPLSH
PLSH
BLSH
MAMI...
...
...SINCE THE DAY I WAS BORN.
I DON'T KNOW ANY OTHER WAY TO BE.
GWSH
YOU KNOW HOW OVER-PROTECTIVE MY MOM IS?
I'VE BEEN THE CENTER OF HER WORLD...
SPSH
SQSH
I'VE HAD TIME TO THINK, AND...
...WELL, I REALIZED A WHOLE BUNCH OF THINGS.

WHAT A HUGE IDIOT.
HE'S ALL WORKED UP...
...OVER A TOTAL MISUNDER-STANDING!
HMP

"TAKE YOUR TIME."
"JUST BE CAREFUL... AND CHOOSE WISELY!"
HMPH!
FMP
LOVE IS SUCH A MESS.


HIM
UM...
WELL, I WON'T STOP YOU.
...YOU'VE ALREADY DECIDED YOU'D RATHER BE WITH HIM, RIGHT?

BYE.
AND I... I WON'T CALL YOU AGAIN.
I DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT.

HEY...
YOHEI... I...!
MAYBE LIFE DOESN'T HAVE TO WORK OUT EASILY...
WHAT ...?

WHY CAN I OVERLOOK A FRIEND'S FAULTS...
...WHEN I CAN'T DO THE SAME FOR THE GUY I LOVE?
TMP TMP
Hello
HEY!
NAK
"I THINK I CAN CHANGE... IF IT'S NOT TOO LATE."
BUT...
...IF HE CAN CHANGE, THEN... CAN I?
YOHEI, WAIT!

SHUT UP!
WHAT ARE YOU CRYING ABOUT?
...AS LONG AS IT WORKS.
AND IF WE TRY... PERHAPS WE'LL FIND THE EASY LIFE... TOGETHER.
I DON'T GET THE GIRL?
oh, well ...
The End

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This book reads from right to left.

RATED T+ FOR OLDER TEENS

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